DRIVEN ALPINE'S MADE A MACAN

FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK

AUTOCAR

EST. 1895 | AUTOCAR.CO.UK | 5 NOVEMBER 2025

50 BEST USED SMALL CARS

Tiny heroes from just £500

STARRING CLIO, FIESTA, POLO, JIMNY, AMI, PANDA, FIAT 500, MINI & MORE

ROAD TEST: PUG'S PROPER SUPERMINI

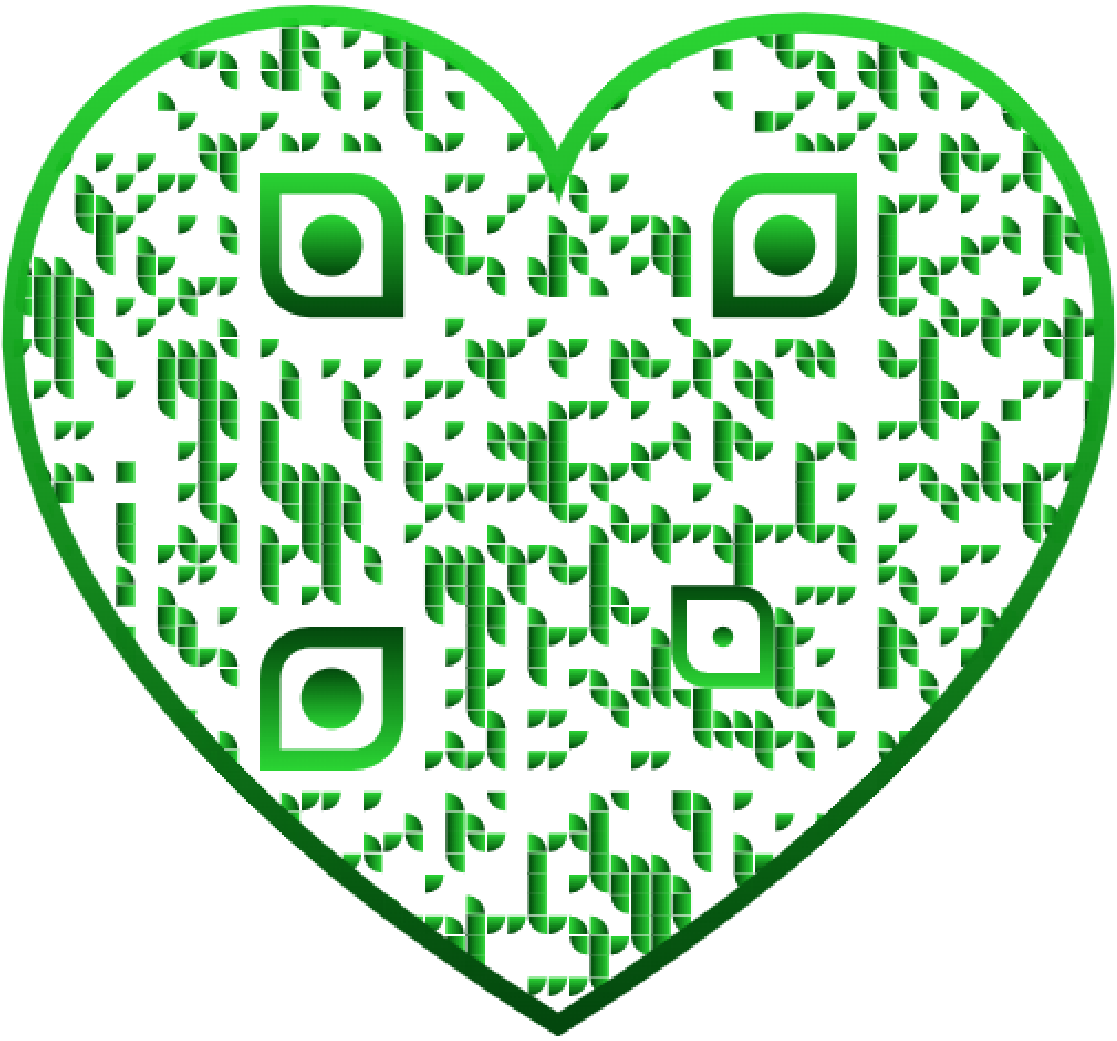
THE £16K MUSTANG WITH A CATCH...

14 TOKYO SHOW STARS

BOLD NEW COROLLA

haymarket
5 – 12 November 2025
£4.99
9 771355 829226 45

5 November 2025 | BYD Section 7



Absolute Radio

WANT MORE REAL MUSIC IN YOUR WORK DAY?

NO REPEAT GUARANTEE

YOU WON'T HEAR THE SAME SONG TWICE.

9AM-5PM WEEKDAYS

Digital Radio Rayo App "Play Absolute Radio"

COMMENT

AFTER 130 YEARS, IT'S THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT

We are celebrating our 130th birthday this week, having published the first issue of Autocar on 2 November 1895. You can enjoy some reflections on what we reported that year on p64, including London's annual cycle show, which featured motorised vehicles for the first time.

One hundred and thirty years later, we find ourselves this week at the Tokyo motor show (p4). Just as the car industry and motor shows have changed and innovated, so have we to ensure we present the best coverage of the car world.

One significant car revealed at Tokyo was the next-generation Toyota Corolla, the best-selling car of all time. The bold concept is a huge change from the current model and absolutely unrecognisable from the original but, as the firm's execs explained in Tokyo, it's intended to fufil the same purpose of practical, affordable transport.

Much like Autocar in 1895 and today, then, it's completely different – yet in many ways exactly the same.

■ If you'd like to discover 130 years of motoring while enjoying the latest, why don't you subscribe yourself or a friend to Autocar this Christmas. See p22 for more. Meanwhile, next week's issue will feature a special 44-page bonus mag celebrating the shared 130th birthday of Autocar and Skoda.

Rachel Burgess, magazine editor
rachel.burgess@haymarket.com

Meanwhile, online...

autocar.co.uk YouTube TikTok

Wild new Ferrari tested

Richard Lane drives the new 296 Speciale - the lighter, more focused version of Ferrari's mid-engined supercar – on road and track.

How to start a car company

Prior and Cropley host a special pod with ex-Jaguar design director Ian Callum. He talks Jag, Aston and his own firm, Callum Designs.

Alfa Romeo's greatest hits

Alfa Romeo was founded back in 1910 – but its story actually started a little earlier. Scan the QR code for a picture special.

Autocar (ISSN 1355-8293 USPS 25-185) is published weekly by Haymarket Media Group, Bridge House, 69 London Road, Twickenham, TW1 3SP, United Kingdom; haymarket.com; tel +44 (0)20 8267 5000

The US annual subscription price is $190.00. Airfreight and mailing in the US by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. US postmaster: Send address changes to Autocar, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at the above address. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

Autocar magazine is also published in Estonia, Greece, India, Japan, Latvia, Korea and Thailand.

Autocar is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). We abide by the Editors' Code of Practice and are committed to upholding the highest standards of journalism. If you think we haven't met those standards and want to make a complaint, contact autocar@haymarket.com. For more information, contact IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or visit www.ipso.co.uk

ipso. Regulated

Haymarket is certified by BSI to environmental standard ISO14001 and energy management standard ISO50001

Recycle

PEFC
PEFC/16-33-795
PEFC Certified
This product is from sustainably managed forests and controlled sources
www.pefc.co.uk

Autocar is a member of the organising committee of Car Of The Year caroftheyear.org

Issues with your mag?
For subscriber issues, call 0344 848 8816. If you can't find a news-stand copy of Autocar in your local area, email autocar@haymarket.com

"I was soon comparing the pointiness of the letter 'M' and the length of the horizontal line in the letter 'G'" p43

AUTOCAR
Issue 6696 | Volume 326 | No 9

NEWS

Bold Corolla at Tokyo motor show 4
Mazda's 503bhp rotary-electric car 6
Sleek SUV key to new Lexus LS family 8
The Subaru that's bringing STI back 10
New MD plots Vauxhall sales push 12
Mercedes-AMG GLC to top 900bhp 14
Bureaucracy holding up chargers 16

FIRST DRIVES

Alpine A390 24
Zeekr 7X 26
Audi Q5 E-hybrid 28
Seat Arona 29
Toyota Hilux 48V Hybrid 30
Vauxhall Frontera Electric 31

ROAD TESTS

BYD Sealion 7 Comfort 32
Peugeot 208 1.2 100PS Style 38

FEATURES

The 50 best used small cars 44
Kia's radical ideas for electric vans 52

LONG-TERMERS

Mazda CX-80 56
Volkswagen Golf GTE 58
BMW X3 59

COLUMNS

Jesse Crosse 13
Mark Tisshaw 15
Steve Cropley 17
Matt Prior 18
Damien Smith 19
Testing, testing 43
Why I love... 74

EVERY WEEK

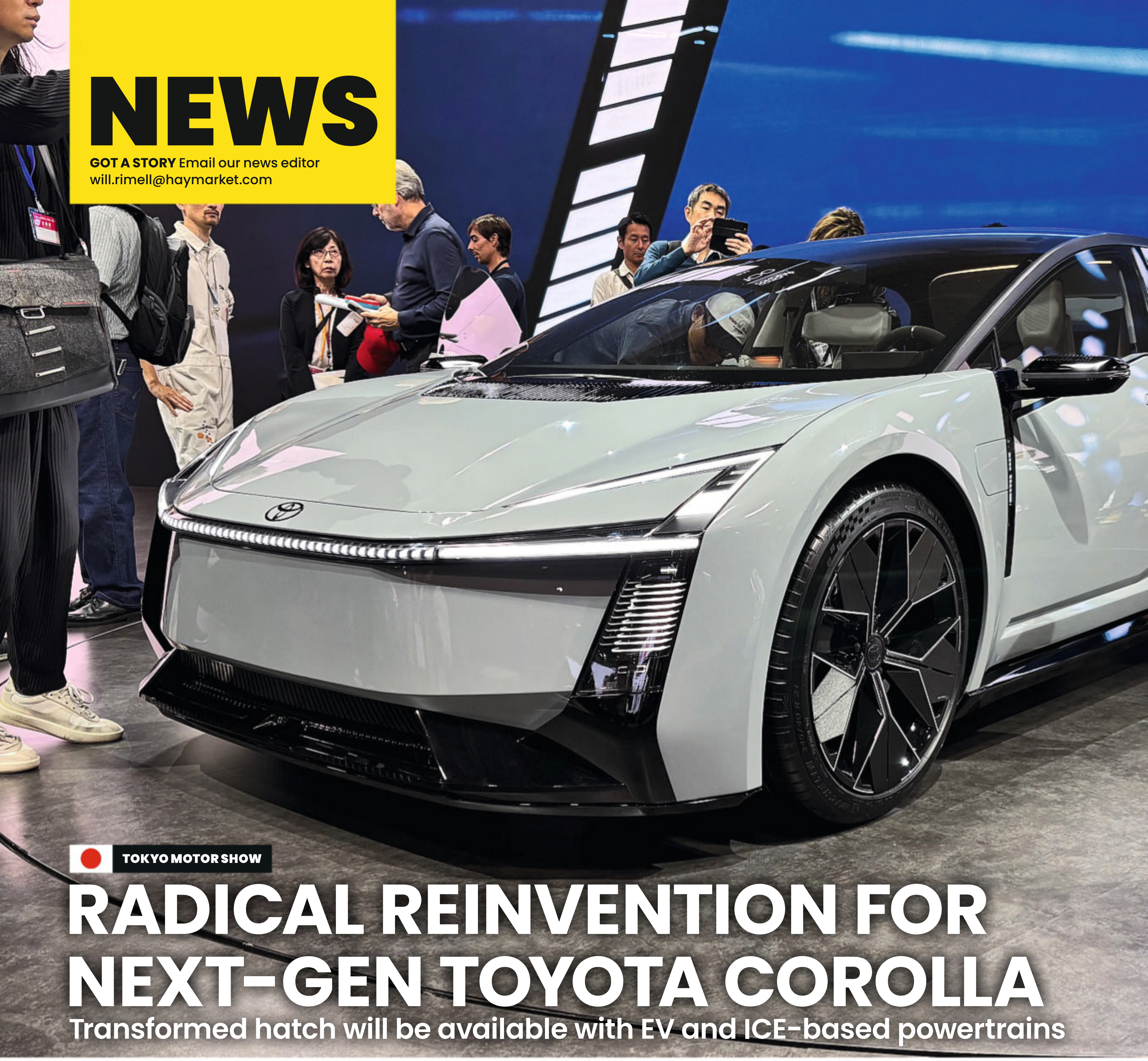
Your Views 20
How to subscribe 22
Access 130 years of Autocar 42
Lost in the archive 64
Road test results 67

USED CARS

Mustang Mach-E buying guide 60
My car & I 62
Caught in the classifieds 63

52 KIA'S PLAN TO RULE VAN WORLD

56 HOW CX-80 PHEV IS TO LIVE WITH



NEWS

GOT A STORY Email our news editor
will.rimell@haymarket.com

TOKYO MOTOR SHOW

RADICAL REINVENTION FOR NEXT-GEN TOYOTA COROLLA

Transformed hatch will be available with EV and ICE-based powertrains

Toyota will reinvent its best-selling Corolla hatchback for a 13th generation with a dramatic new look, next-era interior technology and the option of combustion, electric and likely hydrogen powertrains.

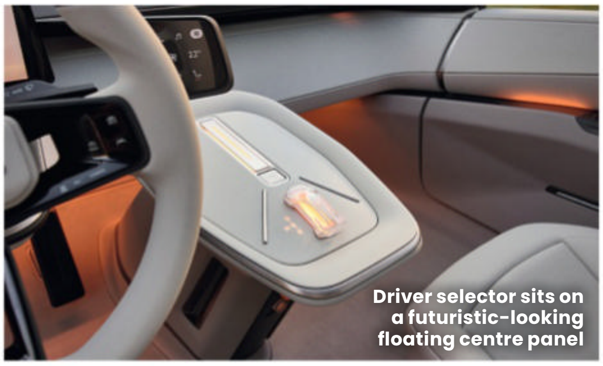
The world's best-selling car, with more than 50 million examples sold since it was launched in 1966, will drastically change shape and major on flexibility as it gears up to take on the next Volkswagen Golf and Skoda Octavia, both due in the coming years.

Redesigned in line with Toyota's sharp new aesthetic language and completely different from today's car, the new Corolla has been previewed by a concept at the Tokyo show.

"We're going to reinvent the best-selling car of all time," said Toyota designer Lance Scott, outlining the Japanese brand's plan to maintain that mass appeal by catering to the varying demands of its customers in markets around the world.

Crucial to that will be a multi-powertrain line-up that includes both electric and combustion-based powertrains (pure-ICE, hybrid and plug-in hybrid) using an entirely new engine whose compact packaging is described as being crucial to the Corolla concept's rakish look

Dramatic styling is intended to create "a car that looks cool"



Driver selector sits on a futuristic-looking floating centre panel

and powertrain-agnostic packaging. Toyota has also told Autocar a hydrogen FCEV powertrain has been developed for the car.

“You can choose your powertrain but you’re not going to compromise on space, style or functionality,” said Scott, suggesting that the next Corolla will offer the same cabin and boot dimensions in all guises.

Scott said Toyota needed to ensure the Corolla offered different types of motive power because the “Corolla is a car for the majority but the majority don’t necessarily want the same answer”.

“Sometimes you need a little bit of a jump to put yourself ahead of rivals”

He added: “Mobility for all has been a part of the brand promise since the beginning, and what we’ve realised is that ‘all’ really means every individual.”

Thus, like its Golf and Octavia rivals, the Corolla will not be a pure-electric proposition in its next iteration – helping to sustain its popularity as demand for EVs continues to progress at dramatically different speeds in key global markets.

“It’s about providing everyone with the right choice,” said Scott. “We don’t want to leave anyone behind.”

Asked by Autocar if the concept is a realistic preview of the next Corolla, he replied: “Let’s see what happens. With a positive reaction from the show, why not? It’s not out of the realms of reality. It could be believable.”

Recent concepts from Toyota including the Aygo X Prologue, Sport Crossover and Urban Crossover have evolved into road-ready customer cars with little visual alteration and the Corolla concept looks just as close to showrooms as those did.

It was designed at Toyota’s Europe design centre in Nice, France, with the aim of totally reinventing the Corolla for a new era, rather than evolving what has gone before.

“We wanted to make a Corolla that people would look at and say: ‘I can’t believe that’s a Corolla,’” said Scott. “Everyone likes to drive a car that looks cool.”

It’s a similar story of revolution rather than evolution inside too, where the Corolla’s traditional, button-heavy cockpit has made way for a minimalist and tech-centric affair that hints at a new treatment for Toyota’s future interiors.

There are very few physical controls, with all main functions accessed via haptics on the steering wheel, an optional touchscreen on the passenger side or a new satellite touch panel off the steering wheel. The absence of a transmission tunnel (a clue to the Corolla’s EV-first engineering) means the centre console has been swapped for a striking new ‘floating’ panel that hosts the drive selector and phone pads.

But the advanced new cabin treatment doesn’t indicate an ambition to take the Corolla into pricier territory, said Scott.

“I don’t think we’re trying to take Corolla upmarket or anything like that. I think the Corolla is the Corolla. It’s kind of a cornerstone,” he said.

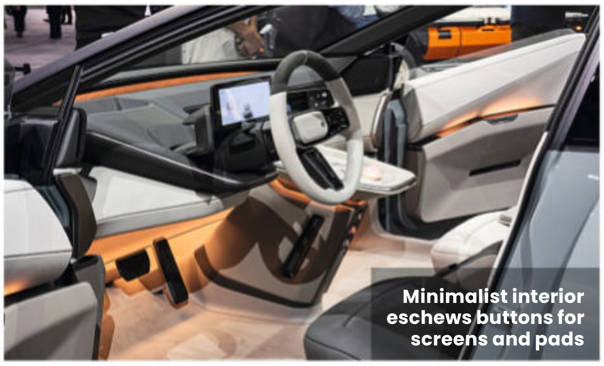
Instead, the aim is to make a clear break from the previous Corollas to keep the model competitive in the face of fearsome new competition – from both legacy brands and newer marques – and renewing popular interest.

“It’s about continuing and improving the design, but also sometimes you need a little bit of a jump to take yourself ahead of the competitors and put yourself at the forefront of the market,” said Scott.

The current Corolla is seven years old so nearing the end of its natural life cycle, but Toyota has given no indication of when its successor will arrive.

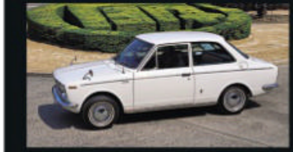
It also hasn’t said whether Burnaston will manufacture the next-generation car. The plant has built the Corolla and its various forebears since opening in 1992.

FELIX PAGE

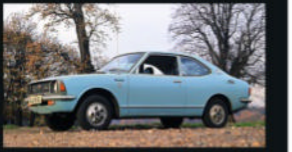


Minimalist interior eschews buttons for screens and pads

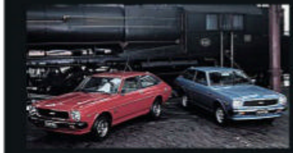
HOW THE COROLLA HAS CHANGED



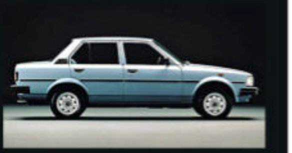
Mk1 1966



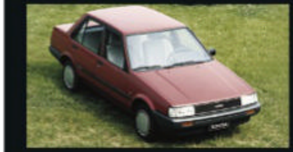
Mk2 1970



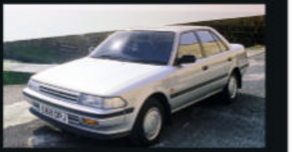
Mk3 1974



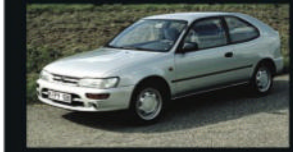
Mk4 1979



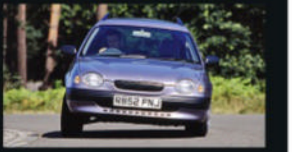
Mk5 1983



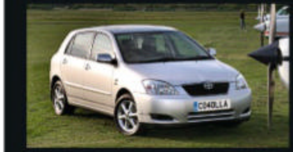
Mk6 1987



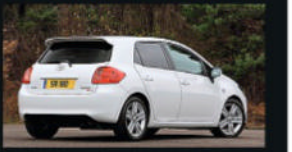
Mk7 1991



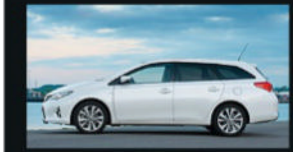
Mk8 1995



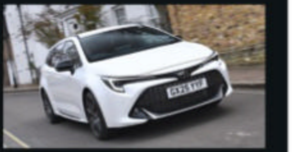
Mk9 2000



Mk10 2006

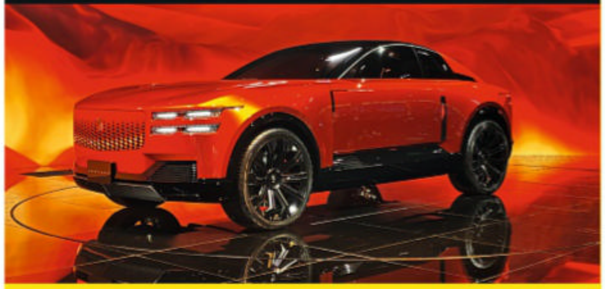


Mk11 2012



Mk12 2018

CENTURY UNVEILS CONTINENTAL GT RIVAL



AT THE OTHER end of the spectrum, Toyota has revealed a striking luxury GT coupé to mark the creation of its new dedicated luxury brand, Century – conceived as a rival to the likes of Bentley and Range Rover.

It is the third dedicated Century model and the first to forgo Toyota badges entirely.

Century has been carved out as a new marque in its own right and the “pinnacle of the Toyota Group portfolio”, serving as a flagship for the group.

Details of the concept itself are light but it has a similar footprint to the Bentley Continental GT while riding slightly higher. Unusually, sliding doors give access to an opulent three-seat cabin, with one seat in the front and two in the rear.

TOKYO MOTOR SHOW

ROTARY CONCEPT SHOWS FUTURE OF MAZDA POWER

Rotary-electric show star could even be carbon negative, claims Mazda

Mazda has revealed a 503bhp sports saloon with a rotary-electric powertrain that promises up to 500 miles of combined range and is set to feature in a production car in the next three years.

The Vision X-Coupé – star of the brand's stage at the Tokyo motor show – is a sleek, rakish four-door with styling based on the Iconic SP concept revealed at the same show two years ago.

It is also, visually and conceptually, evolved from the 2015 RX-Vision concept, which set the tone for the Kodo design language the firm still deploys today and previewed plans for a new generation of powertrain based around a rotary petrol engine.

The concept uses a turbocharged two-rotor engine as part of a plug-in hybrid system, which is said to be capable of delivering 100 miles of range with the engine off. But unlike the electric MX-30 crossover, which uses a rotary as a generator to top up the battery, this concept's rotors actually drive the wheels, as in the RX-3, RX-7 and RX-8 coupés.

Launching a production version of this powertrain would be a significant step for Mazda, which is investing heavily in new ways of decarbonising its cars while it gradually builds up to going all-electric – and the firm's chief technical officer, Ryuichi Umeshita, told Autocar it could be a landmark 'carbon-negative' alternative-fuel solution.

"Of course, the battery EV is a very good solution for going carbon neutral," he said. "But what we've presented today is that with internal combustion engines, we can go even further than that to carbon negative."

The company has been vocal about the potential for synthetic fuels to reduce the environmental impact of combustion engines and has invested in their development while EV uptake has faltered in many of its key markets.

> **"I believe the internal combustion engine can make the environment even cleaner than battery EV"**

Concept's rotary can run on fuel derived from microalgae

Umeshita said that because the concept's rotary engine is designed to run on carbon-neutral fuel, derived from microalgae, it emits 90% less CO_2 than a conventional petrol engine. It is also fitted with a carbon-capture device at the tailpipe, which is said to shave another 20% off.

"So theoretically," he said, "we can reduce by 110% – so that means, as you run, you make the earth cleaner. So we can go carbon negative, which we cannot achieve with the battery EV. That is a very unique pathway.

"I believe the internal combustion engine can make the environment even cleaner than battery EV."

Umeshita said microalgae is much cheaper and less energy intensive to produce than other, synthetic types of alternative fuel. It also has the added benefit of being compatible with existing production engines and

OFFICIAL PICTURES

New 503bhp concept is clearly evolved from 2023's Iconic SP

fuel station infrastructure, so it could in theory be used from today once Mazda works out how to produce it cost-effectively at scale – "and I believe we are very close", said Umeshita.

However, Mazda must still grapple with the inherent increased emissions of a rotary engine compared with a conventional internal combustion powerplant.

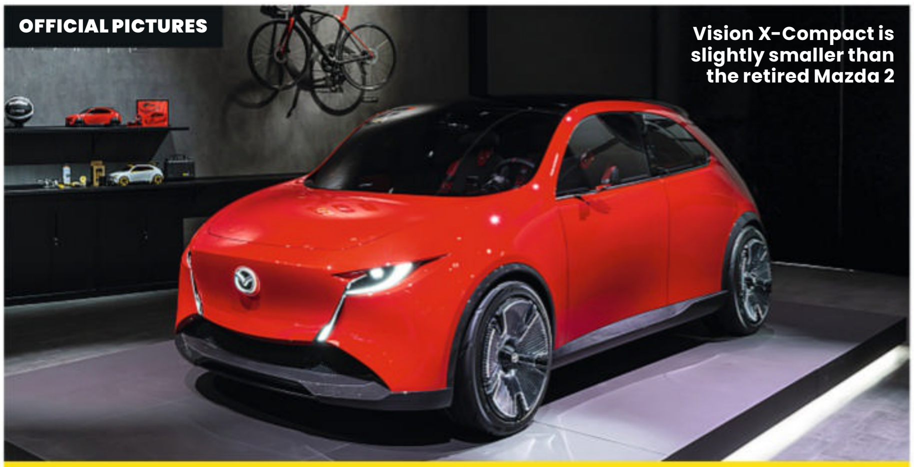
"The Vision has a rotary engine as a drivetrain, not a generator, and in order to realise that, we need good emission levels in a wider range, from low RPM to high RPM," said Umeshita.

"That is the next level of development that we need," he continued, adding that the firm still needs "two to three years" of development time to make it viable.

It is for that reason that the MX-30's rotary engine is not used to drive the wheels directly, instead operating at low revs – remaining within legal emission limits – to charge the battery.

Mazda will not necessarily build a production version of the Polestar 5-sized Vision X "as it is", said Umeshita, but "some technologies of it, or some design elements, will be featured in future Mazda cars".

FELIX PAGE



OFFICIAL PICTURES

Vision X-Compact is slightly smaller than the retired Mazda 2

MAZDA REIMAGINES THE SUPERMINI WITH AN AI TWIST

A NEWLY UNVEILED Mazda hatchback concept could preview the successor to the 2 supermini – and the firm's chief technical officer has told Autocar: "We want to produce it."

Unveiled at the Tokyo motor show, the Vision X-Compact measures 3.8m long, 1.8m wide and 1.5m tall, making it slightly smaller than the 2, which bowed out this year.

Mazda released no technical specifications and called it a design study that represents a "vision for the future of smart mobility".

That future is for "vehicles and people [to] form an emotional connection, much like a friend", said Mazda. To that end, the Vision X-Compact is able to engage in "natural conversation" with the driver using AI.

"We want to express the new relationship between car and driver," CTO Ryuichi Umeshita told Autocar. "Our unique aesthetic is not just to focus on car specs, which can be written on brochures or catalogues, but the 'jinba ittai' – the wellness between the car and driver.

"We care about feelings – how drivers feel, how drivers think – and we've been researching that perspective for years."

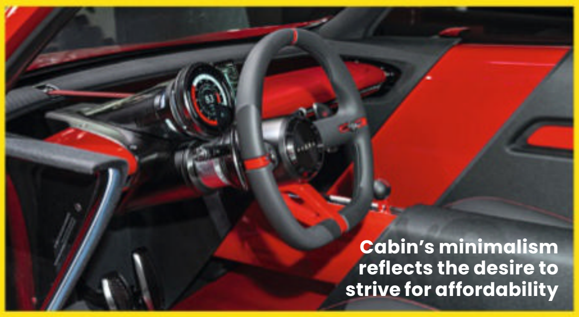
To that end, the Vision X-Compact is hypothetically capable of reading a driver's emotions and reacting appropriately.

"It can sense what you are feeling. If you want to seek something to do, the car can sense that and can propose something," said Umeshita.

He wants customers to see their car as a "very good, intimate friend" – a notion that should appeal particularly to young people who do a lot of virtual activities at home.

That's chiefly why Mazda is showcasing this futuristic technology in a small car that clearly majors on affordability, with a spartan dashboard centred on a phone mount in place of an infotainment screen.

Umeshita said the firm is monitoring reaction to the concept: "I am showcasing that vision car, and if you support it, we want to produce it."



Cabin's minimalism reflects the desire to strive for affordability

Q&A RYUICHI UMESHITA, CTO, MAZDA

Mazda is rare among mainstream car makers in not having its own EV platform. Is that a focus area?

"We've established our own electrification development team and that team has been doing a great job. I've driven a prototype car already, which I would say is a real 'jinba ittai' car – our key concept of wellness between car and driver. It has very good driving dynamics. So we're confident that our EV products will be real Mazda products."

Will you still build the Iconic SP rotary-electric sports car concept?

"Let me answer personally: that is my dream car. I want to make it real. Technology-wise, I believe it's possible. The only outstanding issue is financial. We have re-established the rotary engine development team and we know that our DNA is in sports cars. So I would never say we give it up."

The MX-5 is 10 years old now. What does the future hold for the model?

"We will continue to build the MX-5 for as long as possible. That is our DNA. That is the core of our brand values. We will face a difficult time because of the regulations, so let us think about how we can overcome that – but I would say we'll never stop producing MX-5 for the future."

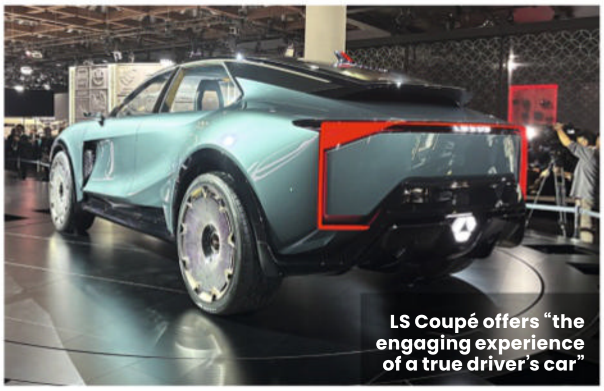
TOKYO MOTOR SHOW

SLEEK LEXUS SUV PREVIEWS FUTURE LS LUXURY FAMILY

LS Coupé SUV concept signals a shift away from a saloon to a more diverse LS line-up

Lexus has unveiled the new LS Coupé concept as one of a number of models – including a single-seater and a six-wheeled MPV (see stories, right) – that could form part of an expanded family of LS vehicles inspired by the seminal luxury saloon of the same name.

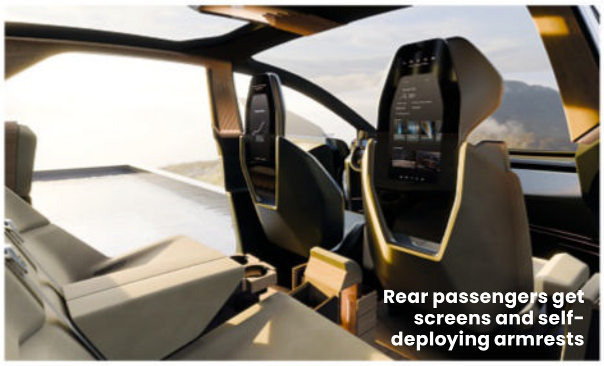
The Toyota-owned brand is responding to the global drop in demand for large saloons that once formed the bedrock of the luxury car market. That includes its own LS, which was retired earlier this year, having been originally launched as Lexus's first model in 1989.



LS Coupé offers "the engaging experience of a true driver's car"

While the Micro LS and MPV concept show some of the ways that spirit could be channelled, the LS Coupé concept – unveiled at the Tokyo motor show – looks to be the most production ready.

The sleek premium SUV would be a natural rival to similarly conceived models from BMW, Mercedes and Porsche, though the firm has given no indication of its performance potential or dimensions.



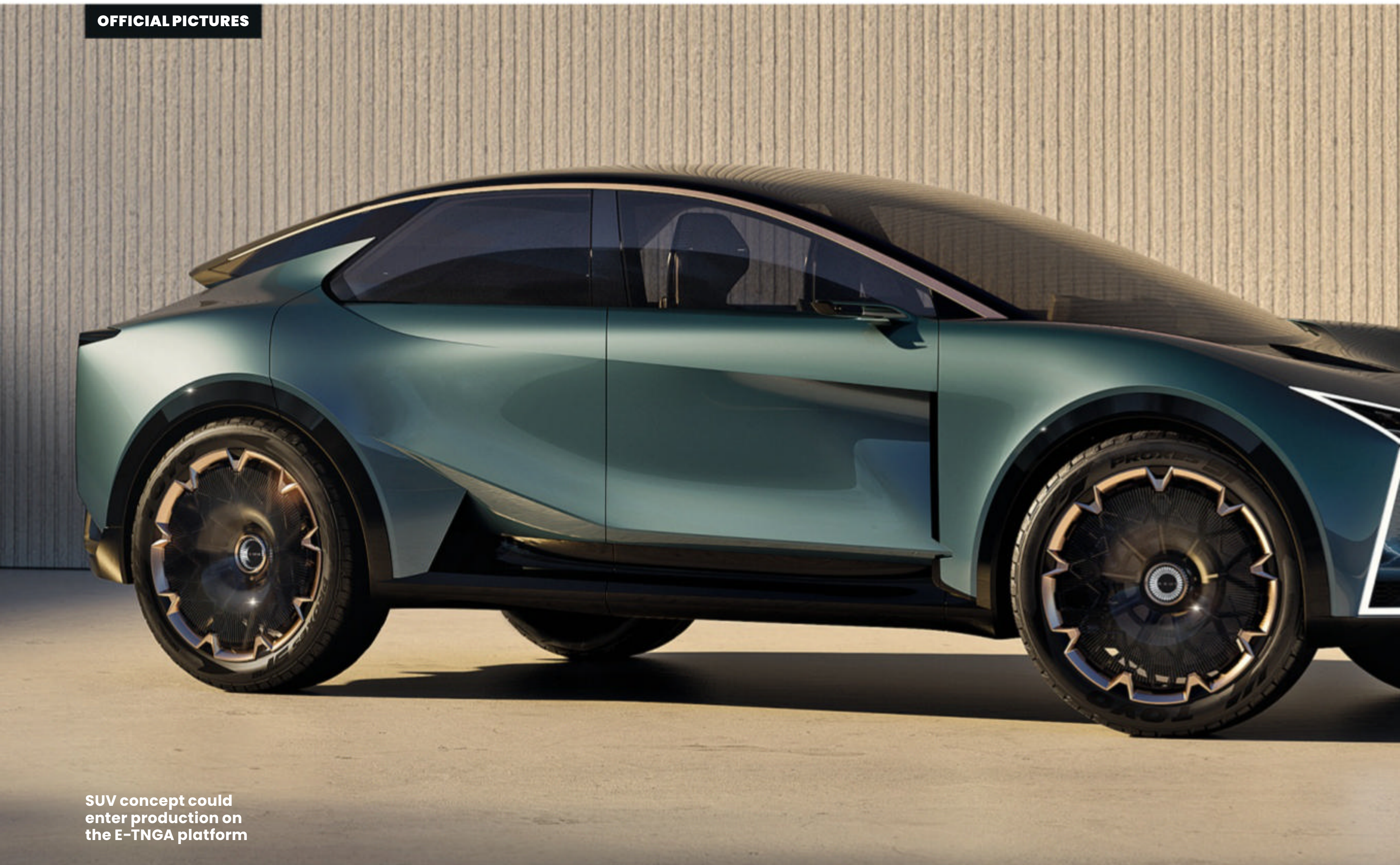
Rear passengers get screens and self-deploying armrests

Ian Cartabiano, who runs Toyota's Californian design studio, said the LS Coupé will "let you do it all, and do it all in style".

He added: "It offers a future luxury experience with the interior space of a luxury sedan [saloon] and the engaging experience of a true driver's car."

Irrespective of its likelihood of making production, though, the concept is important for what it shows about the future of Lexus products.

Inside, for example, the Coupé features a trio of widescreen digital displays – two for the driver and another, which folds away, for the passenger – running the next generation of Lexus's infotainment system. Meanwhile, the yoke-style steering wheel hints at plans to keep developing the RZ's steer-



SUV concept could enter production on the E-TNGA platform by-wire system and the sports-style driver's seat emphasises the ongoing importance of performance.

In the back, passengers can use automatically deploying armrests and large, portrait-format screens integrated into the front seatbacks.

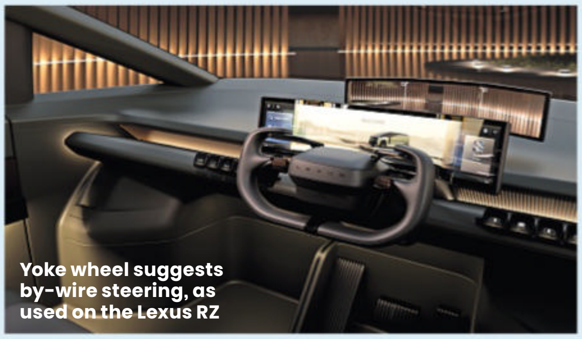
There is also a high-speed drone that can deploy from the rear deck to follow the car around and document a journey "just to make it more fun", said Cartabiano, and rather than a conventional bootlid, the concept features a pull-out drawer "for ease and elegant storage".

Plans for a production version remain under wraps, but no doubt Lexus could relatively easily use Toyota's E-TNGA modular architecture for such a model – and thereby make it a close relation to the smaller RZ.

It is possible that a production version would serve as an electric equivalent to the RX SUV, Lexus's second-longest-running product line and one of its most popular global models today.

FELIX PAGE

LEXUS EYES BENTLEY WITH LAVISH MPV



Yoke wheel suggests by-wire steering, as used on the Lexus RZ

THIS FUTURISTIC, SIX-wheeled Lexus MPV has been conceived to redefine the concept of a luxury car while drawing on the spirit of the long-standing LS nameplate.

Called the LS Concept, it has been designed as a "private sanctuary" that "invites you to discover your own space", said the company. It also previews a dramatic revamp of the brand's design hallmarks and positioning.

Simon Humphries, head of design for Toyota and Lexus, said Lexus will be afforded greater creative freedom now that Toyota has spun its Century brand (see p5) into a dedicated luxury marque that sits at the top of its portfolio.

Humphries said Lexus aimed "to challenge your perception of what a luxury brand can be" as traditional saloons fall out of favour with luxury car buyers.

Lexus has already introduced a luxury MPV to its European ranks in the form of the hybrid-powered LM, but the LS Concept envisions an all-new range-topper that would ultimately rival the likes of the Bentley Bentayga and Rolls-Royce Cullinan.

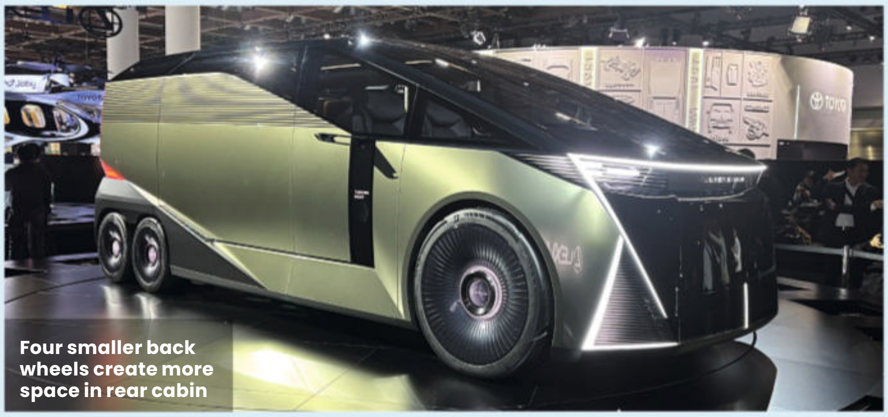
The six-wheel set-up has been chosen for the greater interior space it affords, with smaller wheels used on the rear axle to minimise the incursion of the arches into the floorpan.

"Since the LS came out in 1989," said Ian Cartabiano, who heads Toyota's Californian design studio, "the rules of the luxury market have changed. Executive sedans [saloons] used to rule the world but now they're fighting a losing battle with SUVs."

He said the "grand entrance was the starting point" of the luxury MPV's conception, with the sliding door giving way to a cavernous, tech-heavy four-seat rear cabin that's flexible in format and upholstered in rich, high-quality materials.

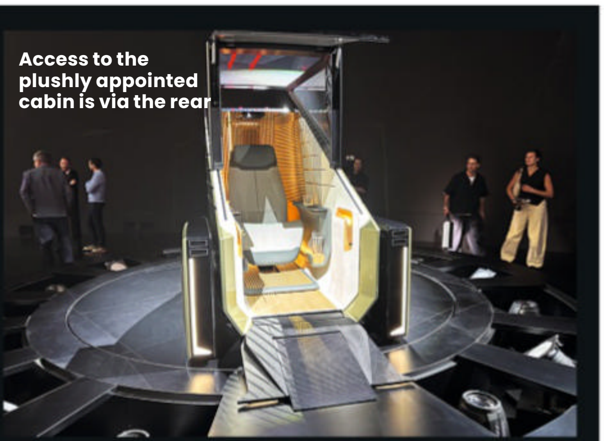
The concept also features an unusual steering yoke device in place of a conventional wheel (hinting that the LS is equipped with by-wire steering like the new Lexus RZ), backed by a wraparound digital display arrangement and flanked by big, chunky buttons.

No technical specifications or dimensions of the LS Concept have been revealed and the firm has not officially given any indication of plans to put it into production.



Four smaller back wheels create more space in rear cabin

SINGLE-SEAT LEXUS PACKS PREMIUM FEEL IN 2.5M POD



Access to the plushly appointed cabin is via the rear

LEXUS IS GEARING up for a potential entry into the single-seater market with the Micro LS concept.

Described as "a luxury mobility experience for one", it is a vision of how the marque can offer a luxury saloon experience in as small a package as possible.

The three-wheeler is only slightly wider than the single seat within it and looks to be about the same length as the Citroën Ami – around 2.5m.

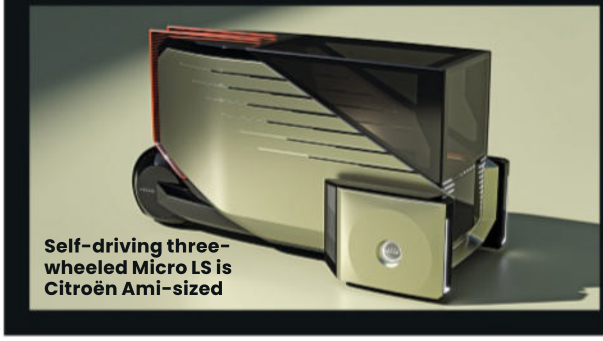
It is a "completely new kind of mobility", said Ian Cartabiano, who is in charge of Toyota's California design studio.

"It is designed for point-to-point, intra-city travel where roads are tight or where traditional cars aren't even allowed at all," he said.

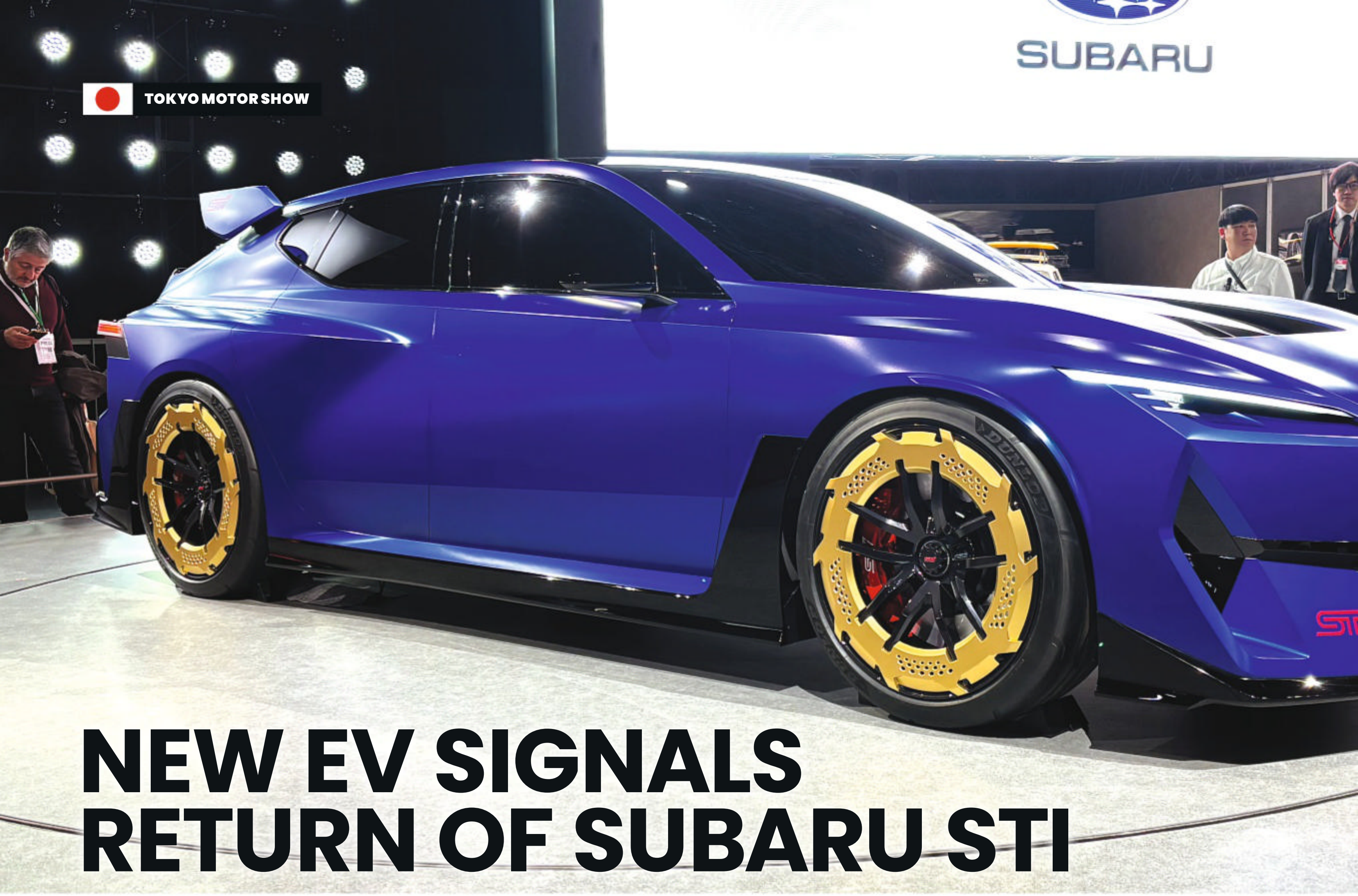
Featuring a raft of innovative space-saving features – including a canopy-style entrance and slide-out cargo compartment housing a bespoke Lexus luggage set – the Micro LS is effectively a self-driving pod with a business class-style cabin.

Contained within are a leather, armchair-style reclining seat; a huge vertical display and control screen where a steering wheel would ordinarily be; floors and walls finished in bamboo; and a bespoke glassware set for drinks on the move.

The design target was "to create a rejuvenating escape", said Cartabiano, and to challenge the design conventions of micro-mobility. "Small can sometimes look a little too cute. We want this to look premium," he said.



Self-driving three-wheeled Micro LS is Citroën Ami-sized



NEW EV SIGNALS RETURN OF SUBARU STI

Tokyo concept heralds anticipated comeback for revered sporty badge

Subaru has given a glimpse into the future of its STI performance brand with a wild new sports car concept.

The Performance-E STI concept "represents the future of the performance scene, spearheading Subaru's new generation", the company said.

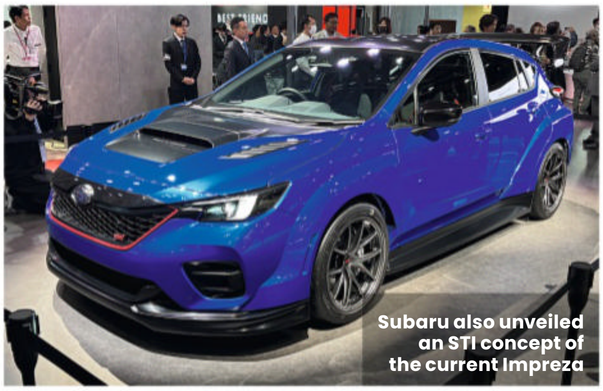
Subaru has released very few details, but it said the concept's design has been influenced by the brand's heritage and offers a "driver-friendly layout and a comfortable, spacious interior".

It is also understood to feature two driven axles, in line with the STI brand's association with rally-honed four-wheel-drive performance.

The concept's unveiling comes shortly after Subaru Europe boss David Dello Stritto told Autocar: "There are plans to bring back the sportiness in Subaru."

He said the brand had a reputation for selling cars that were "safe, fun and tough – 'SFT'". But he added there were opportunities to consider relaunching a performance model. The previous Impreza WRX STI bowed out of Europe nearly a decade ago.

"There's a fourth pillar I've been missing to sell in Europe for the past 10 years and that's P, for power and performance," Dello Stritto said. "Ask the average person what Subaru means and they'll say STI. You can't disassociate this from Subaru. So we need to bring sportiness back.


Subaru also unveiled an STI concept of the current Impreza

"Right now, we couldn't do it: Europe says you can't, because you have a GPF [gasoline particulate filter] that can literally choke your engine."

Primarily for that reason, Dello Stritto said, electric vehicles present an interesting opportunity to reinvent the STI brand. "You've got the power and you've got an all-wheel drive system," he added, the latter being an intrinsic element of Subaru's performance heritage.

"We're working on more sporty models, and electrification allows us to do this", he said. The Performance E-STI appears to be the manifestation of that ambition.

The concept has been revealed just ahead of the 30th anniversary of Colin McRae's WRC title victory at the wheel of the Subaru Impreza 555, and it clearly takes some influence from the iconic Group A conqueror, with its dark blue paint, gold wheels and pink STI detailing.

The Performance E-STI does not appear to be based on a current production model, but as a rakish, four-door fastback, it could preview a successor to the current Legacy, which has been on sale outside of the UK for six years.

The Performance E-STI follows on from the wild STI E-RA concept Subaru revealed in 2022 as an early indication of its plans to maintain a performance car offering in the EV era.

That concept, though, was a dedicated supercar and completely unrelated to any production model.

RED TAPE BE GONE, BY GULLY

The government has proposed ripping up the requirement for drivers to obtain planning permission to install a cross-pavement EV charging gully. A public consultation will follow.

SILVERSTONE'S LAPLAND

Ever wanted to drive around Silverstone in your own car? Now is your chance: the festive Lap of Lights takes place between 12 December and 3 January. Tickets can be found online and are priced from £50.

EV concept has motors on each axle to give STI's signature all-wheel drive

Its quartet of Yamaha EV motors produced 1073bhp, and a carbonfibre monocoque helped to keep weight to 1690kg.

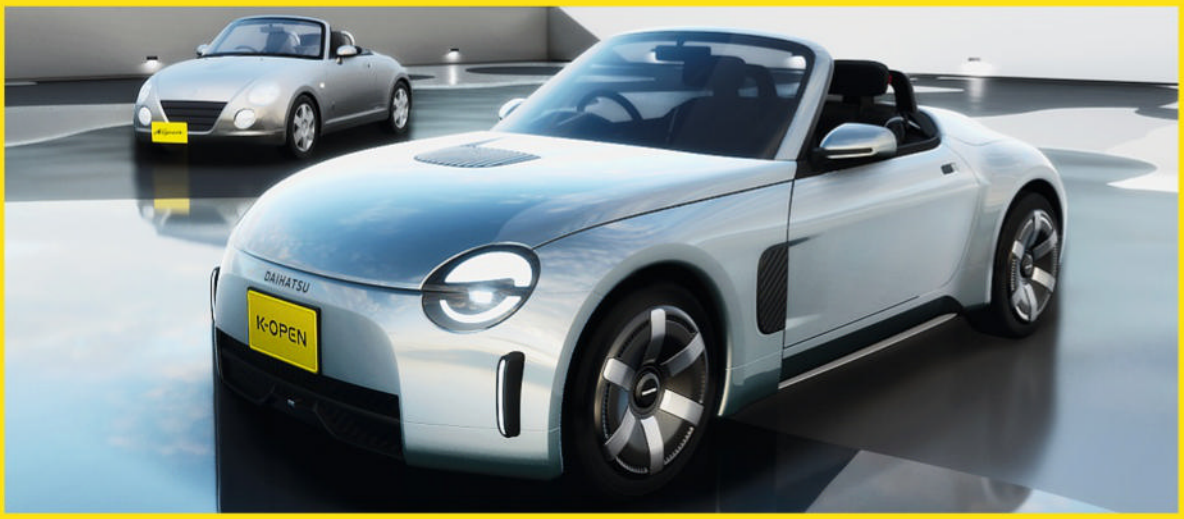
Also on Subaru's Tokyo stand was an STI concept version of the current production Impreza, which is more likely to enter production in the near future as a replacement for the US- and Japanese-market WRX that is in effect a stand-alone model separate from the Impreza.

Details were similarly sparing, but Subaru said it uses a boxer engine and is all-wheel drive, and it had been designed to "offer more customers the chance to experience the joy of driving".

There was no word on any plans for a production version, nor any indication that it could be sold as a global model.

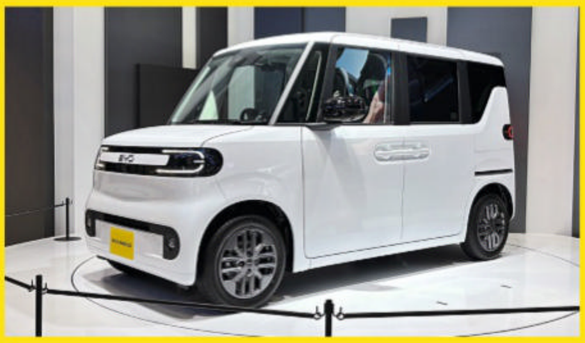
FELIX PAGE

PLEASE CAN WE HAVE THESE TOO?



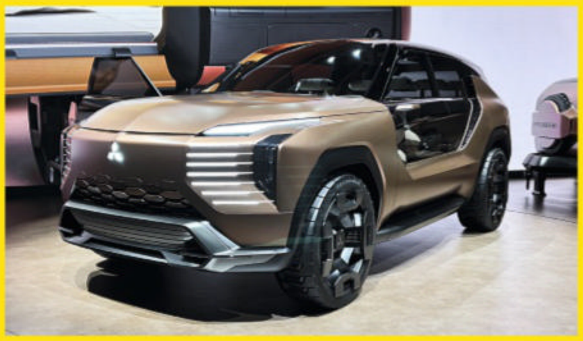
DAIHATSU K-OPEN

Tokyo hosts some of the strangest, and indeed coolest, reveals in the launch season calendar. Sadly, lots of the new models don't make it to the UK, no matter how much we'd like them to. The Daihatsu K-Open – a tiny roadster with retro styling, rear-wheel drive and a manual gearbox – is among our most burning desires. Just look at it!



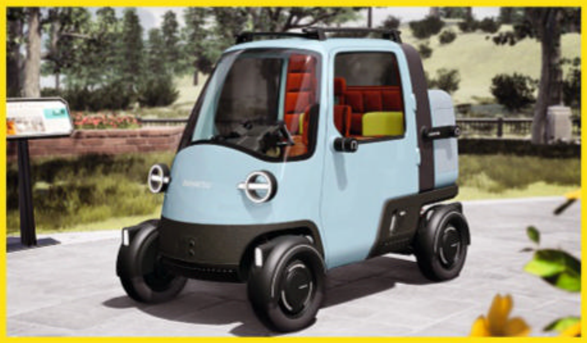
BYD RACCO

A real statement of intent. Chinese brands tend not to be that well received in Japan, so for BYD to devote millions to developing a car for the nation's signature kei car segment – and a treasured part of its cultural identity – reveals just how strong its will for global growth really is.



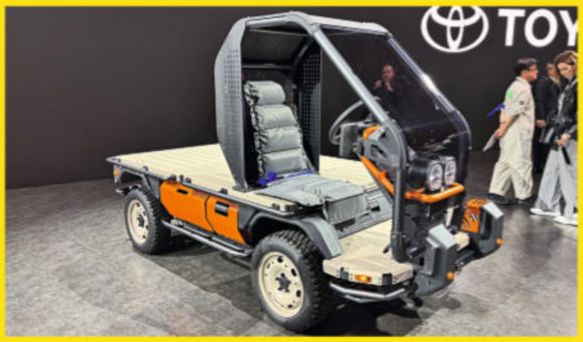
MITSUBISHI ELEVANCE

An Evo for the brave new world? The concept's four electric motors and petrol engine combine for a claimed huge, but undisclosed, power output and it has the Evo's understeer-banishing Active Yaw Control system. You can even frighten the daylights out of five passengers.



DAIHATSU MIDGET X

This clever little van previews Japan's alternative to the Citroën Ami Cargo. It seats three, with a McLaren F1-style seating layout. The rear-mounted cargo bin – a little bit like a backpack – can be swapped for an open load bed or other attachments, as the owner wishes.



TOYOTA IMV ORIGIN

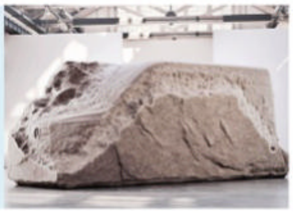
Hang on, where's the rest of it? This tiny truck, aimed at African markets, is "deliberately incomplete" and will be shipped as half-finished but running for rural workshops to convert to suit their needs. Toyota CEO Koji Sato described building an unfinished car as "frustrating".

LET'S BREAK THIS DOWN

The new RAC Scalextric set gives a glimpse into the future of autonomous car repairs, with a recovery van racing to catch a runaway supercar. Or it's just trying to interest kids in its business.

SPRINTER ON THE ROCKS

Anyone know an archaeologist? This is The Boulder, a design study that previews the next-gen Mercedes Sprinter. it will lead a new line-up of vans from the German firm and they'll be offered with ICE or EV power.



Every little helps: Vauxhall intends to re-energise its retail network to grow sales

DEALERS AND NEW CARS KEY TO VAUXHALL ENDING SLUMP

Boss targets top-three sales spot as brand prepares fresh model rollout

The new managing director of Vauxhall wants to return the British brand to its historic position as one of the UK's best-selling car manufacturers, following a slump since the Covid pandemic.

Steve Catlin, who took the helm in June, told Autocar: "My intention is to put Vauxhall back on the podium. That's not an immediate aspiration that we're going to deliver next year, but over the next few years I want to get Vauxhall back onto the podium."

Catlin faces a significant task: according to data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, the three best-selling brands in the UK up to the end of September were Volkswagen, BMW and Kia.

Third-placed Kia has sold 93,000 cars this year, compared with Vauxhall's 66,000. It's also being outsold by Stellantis sibling brand Peugeot (70,600).

"We're a unique brand in that we are only here for the UK, and we need to deliver that additional performance," said Catlin, referencing how the brand is marketed under the name of parent Opel in every other market in which it operates.

Catlin: "Market is complex"

Asked how Vauxhall plans to achieve such growth, Catlin highlighted a focus on retail buyers and dealers rather than the historical focus on fleet customers.

He said: "The UK market is a complex market. There are fleet channels and retail channels, and there are sub-channels within that. I think there has been a tendency historically for Vauxhall to be concentrated

Autocar copies dating back to 1895 will be housed in extensive BMM Archive

AUTOCAR ARCHIVE MOVES TO BRITISH MOTOR MUSEUM

AUTOCAR IS PROUD to announce the British Motor Museum in Gaydon as the new home of the physical Autocar Archive.

Our archive has been available digitally since 2023, and following the completion of that project, a new home was sought for our printed copies. The Archive at the British Motor Museum was the obvious choice.

Researchers visiting the museum in person will soon be able to search Autocar's digital archive through a dedicated terminal.

Autocar editor Mark Tisshaw said: "We're delighted to be

on a few of those channels and not all of them, sometimes to the detriment of the retail market.

"It's my intention to not only deliver the growth but also do that in the retail space, activating the amazing team of retailers we've got – 200 partners out there – to energise and engage them to help us deliver that ambition."

Key to that goal, Catlin said, is the first UK-focused marketing campaign in "a decade at least".

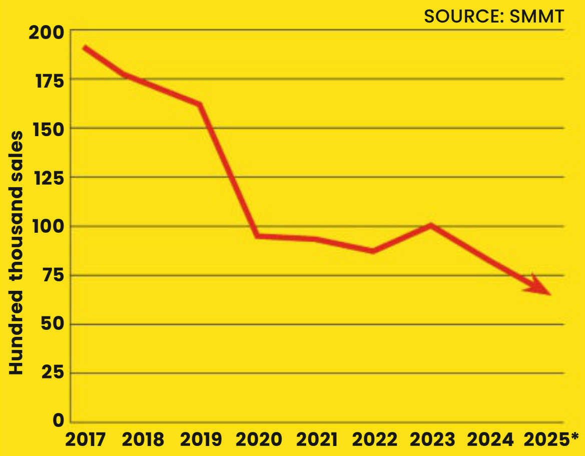
He added: "I think if we can do that next year, we can add some emotional connection to all of the rational reasons why a Vauxhall is a great purchase."

A wave of new and updated models will also be crucial. Catlin predicts that the incoming Frontera – which is larger than the Mokka crossover but also cheaper – will become the brand's second-best-selling car next year, behind the Corsa. For reference, nearly 30,000 Corsas were registered in the UK last year, followed by 20,000 Mokkas. If the Frontera splits the difference between the two, that alone would nearly bridge Vauxhall's gap to Kia.

The relaunch of the GSE performance sub-brand with a 276bhp EV version of the Mokka will also provide Vauxhall with something of a halo model, suggested Catlin: "Vauxhall has got a great history in the hot hatch market. Everybody you talk to – certainly of my generation – has got a story with Nova SRs and cool cars in that part of the market. That is a part of the brand that's been missing, and ultimately it helps because it creates some aspiration and emotion."

CHARLIE MARTIN

VAUXHALL'S PERFORMANCE DECLINE



*Jan-Sep 2025

ADDRESSING THE CHINA ISSUE

Vauxhall boss Steve Catlin wants the UK government to look into whether Chinese car manufacturers are unfairly using state subsidies to undermine established brands, after they captured a record 12.8% of the UK new car market in September.

"What we see is they are offering extraordinary value for money," Catlin said. "I don't know how they're able to achieve that versus European manufacturers. We want to see a fair playing field in the UK market."

In September, Chinese car makers (led by MG, BYD, Omoda/Jaecoo) surpassed Korean brands (Hyundai and Kia at 10.6%) in market share and neared Japanese brands (14.9%).

MG's record 14,577 sales placed it in eighth place, ahead of Vauxhall in 11th.

The UK has so far chosen not to follow the approach of the EU, which imposed additional tariffs – of up to 45.3% – on Chinese-built EVs last year due to what it described as "unfair subsidisation".

Chinese brands are able to undercut European ones

partnering with the British Motor Museum for this very special project.

"The Autocar Archive tells the history of the motor car in real time back to 1895, and the digitisation of the archive was a huge moment for the brand in making this accessible to all.

"There is no better place for our physical archive to reside, being so close to so many of the cars we have reported on and driven over the past 130 years."

Stephen Laing, head of collections at the British Motor Museum, said: "As the world's longest-running car magazine, Autocar has provided a continuous commentary on the motor car for a century and more. Together we can continue to capture the stories from today and those in the future."

Following the digitisation and combining of our respective physical archives, some gaps have been identified, and we are inviting readers and collectors to contribute to the physical archive to help make it complete.

Tisshaw added: "We would love to hear from any readers or collectors who can help make the archive a complete one and would urge anyone who would like to contribute to this project to reach out to the British Motor Museum."

Scan the QR code to see which magazines are missing.

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE

Soft Car 360 crash test target withstands repeated impacts

WHY ADAS CRASH TEST TARGETS ARE A SOFT TOUCH

IT HAS BEEN said for years that when autonomous cars arrive, the technology driving them won't be all-new but more an evolution of the advanced driver assistance systems we have today. ADAS really got going as standard kit in the UK a decade ago, when manufacturers had to fit autonomous emergency braking to have a hope of gaining five stars from Euro NCAP. But beyond computer simulation, how can these increasingly complex systems be tested safely and without trashing thousands of vehicles on proving grounds?

One way is by using soft targets like the Soft Car 360, developed by AB Dynamics and its sister company Dynamic Research Inc (DRI). A hatchback version of the Softcar is Euro NCAP's official Global Target vehicle (GVT) for ADAS testing. It's made from lightweight panels, and anyone familiar with flat-pack furniture or building model aeroplanes would be comfortable putting it together. The panels can be re-assembled in eight minutes and separate into lightweight parts on impact to avoiding damaging either test vehicle or target.

It can act as a static target, but its greatest use is as a moving target mounted to the partners' 'GST platform', a battery-powered plate a bit like a large speed bump. The platform comes in various sizes, including a small one for dummy pedestrians and cyclists. Both can be remote controlled or pre-programmed with a 'path following' algorithm capable of anything from steady-state cornering and double lane changes to whole laps of Silverstone. Despite the Soft Car's lightweight, prefab construction, it can hit 75mph on a GST platform.

With the increase in demand for testing of camera-based ADAS that relies on visual cues from brake lights and indicators, the latest addition to the Soft Car kit is a rechargeable active tail-light system. The lights have an integrated battery and communication system and can be operated manually with a remote-control transmitter, programmed to work automatically, synchronised to the target's movements or given customised lighting sequences.

In line with making the main Soft Car target non-damaging to test vehicles, the tail-lights are made using flexible LEDs, a lightweight mounting system and special protective cases for the batteries and electronics.

Batteries last a full day's testing and can easily be swapped for replacements if necessary during the session. In durability testing, the Soft Car equipped with the new tail-lights was hit repeatedly by a test vehicle at 62mph and, according to the maker, neither the Soft Car, the light system or the test vehicle sustained any damage.

Soft target includes realistic LED tail-lights

GLC FLAGSHIP TOPS 900BHP AFTER BIG AMG MAKEOVER

Mercedes SUV will use three axial-flux motors for sub-3.0sec 0-62mph

The new electric Mercedes-Benz GLC SUV will spawn an AMG-badged flagship next year that will be one of the most powerful models to have come out of Affalterbach.

While related to the electric SUV unveiled at September's Munich motor show, the new AMG GLC will represent a significant technical departure from that car. It will draw heavily on the AMG.EA drivetrain first revealed by the record-breaking 1341bhp GT XX research prototype.

The SUV will use three axial-flux motors – one on the front axle and a further two at the rear – to achieve an output that will push beyond 900bhp and almost double that of the standard car's 489bhp.

This positions it as a direct rival to the incoming Porsche Cayenne Turbo, which is set to deliver up to 980bhp with launch control enabled.

When it arrives, it will be the third-most-powerful AMG model to date and the most powerful AMG SUV – although it will be superseded by the BMW XM-rivalling 1000bhp GT SUV that is scheduled to arrive in 2027.

Sources have told Autocar that AMG is targeting a 0-62mph time of less than 3.0sec and a governed top speed of 155mph.

Crucial to the potent GLC's heady reserves is AMG's latest battery technology. It eschews the prismatic cells used by standard versions of the GLC EQ in favour of new cylindrical cells.

These are claimed to offer superior power density and thermal characteristics to the prismatic cells used by the standard car.

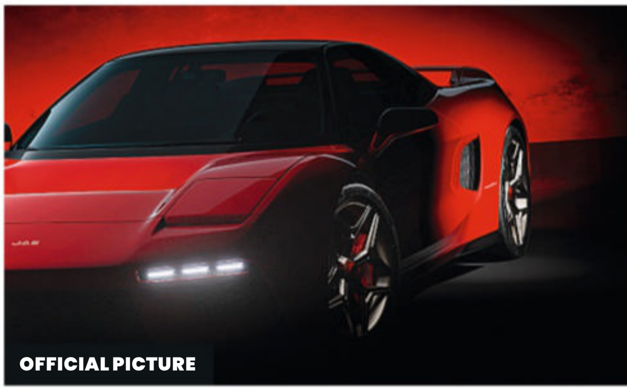
The 800V battery pack of AMG's new electric-powered SUV is also set to feature a direct cooling system where coolant flows around each individual cylindrical cell to help maintain an optimal operating temperature.

AMG sources say the new thermal battery management is essential for sustaining the high discharge rates needed to power the triple-motor set-up, while also enabling consistent 400kW charging capability – a 70kW increase over the standard model. The advanced cooling is claimed to allow for rapid heat dissipation during track use, addressing a key limitation of existing performance-focused electric cars.

The GLC flagship is also set to adopt a simulated gearshift mode similar to that used by the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N and a sound simulator conceived to provide the blare of a V8.

GREG KABLE

"It will be the most powerful AMG SUV to date"



HONDA NSX TURNS RESTOMOD WITH PININFARINA STYLING

ITALIAN RACE CAR manufacturer JAS Motorsport is turning its attention to road-going machinery, starting with a new Honda NSX restomod styled by Pininfarina.

Initial images show the car will remain faithful to the 1990 original, retaining its pop-up headlights and small rear spoiler while gaining a more aggressive-looking stance. At the rear, it appears to wear a purposeful diffuser evoking that fitted to the later NSX-R.

The NSX's original bodywork – which made it the world's first road-going car made entirely from aluminium – will be replaced by a carbonfibre shell and it will be available in both left- and right-hand-drive forms.

As with the original, power

MOST POWERFUL AMG CARS TO DATE

AMG GT XX 1341bhp

AMG One 1048bhp

AMG GLC 900bhp-plus

AMG GT 63 S E Performance 831bhp

AMG SL 63 S E Performance 805bhp

AUTOCAR IMAGE

will come from a naturally aspirated V6 engine mated to a six-speed manual gearbox.

JAS said that the powerplant will be "NSX-inspired" so it's possible it's developing an all-new unit or a reworked version of the NSX's 3.0-litre Honda engine.

The car will be revealed in full early next year.

EX5 will rival Enyaq, priced from £31,990 with 257-mile range

GEELY EX5 STARTS BRAND'S VALUE-LED BLITZ IN UK

CHINESE CAR BRAND Geely plans to launch 10 electrified models in the UK by 2030 and will major on value as it eyes a share of the lucrative hatchback and crossover segments.

Geely is the namesake brand of the Geely Automotive group, which is China's largest privately owned car firm and includes Volvo, Lotus, Polestar and taxi maker LEVC – as well as the Zeekr, Galaxy and Lynk&Co brands that aren't sold in the UK.

It's launching in the UK with the EX5, a 4.6m-long electric SUV positioned as a value alternative to the Skoda Enyaq, Ford Explorer and Tesla Model Y.

By the end of next year, Geely plans to have four cars on sale in the UK – two plug-in hybrids and another EV in addition to the EX5. Then it will add a further six by 2030, eventually creating a range across the B-, C-, D- and E-segments and including both crossovers and hatches.

Some of these cars are already on sale in China but others have yet to be launched.

With deliveries set to start "very soon", the EX5 will begin this onslaught and is available to order now in a choice of three trim levels, with prices starting from £31,990. At its launch, the EX5 will have 215bhp and 257 miles of range.

Geely offers its own discount on the EX5 due to its ineligibility for the UK government's Electric Car Grant. This translates to a reduction of £2300, £3200 or £3750, depending on trim. An additional £1000 part-exchange allowance is also offered.

Geely UK boss Michael Yang said a focus on affordability is one of the main pillars of the Geely brand. "But we'll keep a proper profit," he added.

Yang also did not rule out the possibility of Geely building its cars in Europe to circumvent the EU's tariffs on Chinese EVs. There are no current plans to produce cars in the UK and European production would be "a solution not a target".

EX5 is the first of 10 planned electrified UK Geelys by 2030

Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW

Can you differentiate a Geely from a BYD or Chery or Changan?

A GEELY OFFICIAL once told me that the reason Chinese car groups launch so many brands is because of the lack of brand loyalty among local consumers. We're still in an expansionist era but it will calm down eventually – and therefore "there's a race to be in the group that makes it to the finishing line", they said.

Geely itself is the latest Chinese brand to launch in the UK, starting with its EX5 (see left). It's quite a similar story to that of several other Chinese car makers that have launched here in recent months: lots of technology for a smaller outlay targeted at British buyers who aren't as brand loyal as you think so sales are there for the taking.

The problem now with so many Chinese brands on the market is how to differentiate one from another when they have so little history. We inherently know where an Audi sits in the market compared with a Ford, or a Dacia against a Volkswagen. But a Changan from a Geely, a Chery from a BYD, an Omoda from a Jaecoo?

Chery likens itself to Volkswagen, as the lead brand from a group that also contains Jaecoo and Omoda. Jaecoo has probably done the best job in building brand recognition by making its 7 look like a Range Rover Evoque from Temu.

The BYD model range already feels quite disparate, which makes it hard to work out its centre of gravity. BYD has called itself premium and executive vice-president Stella Li has likened its Denza brand to Porsche and its Yangwang brand to Ferrari.

Changan has said its brand is known for customer service and in the UK it hopes its cars will stand out for the work done at its UK engineering base. Geely has said it wants to be better than rivals at looking after customers and highlights the work done by Lotus Engineering in the development of its cars to make them appeal to UK buyers. They launch with these unique qualities in the UK just a few weeks apart.

None of this lack of clarity in what any of these brands stand for or are all about has been a barrier to success so far for the better-prepared Chinese brands with strong dealer networks and go-to market strategies. Chery, BYD, Omoda and Jaecoo enjoyed an almost 7.5% market share in the UK between them during September this year.

Given the UK new car market is projected only nominal growth and the Chinese expansion shows no signs of slowing (Nio and Lepas are among those on the way), what surely awaits is a price war between the new arrivals. If generic branding and overlapping products don't hold them back, perhaps being seen in buyers' eyes as cheap rather than good value will.

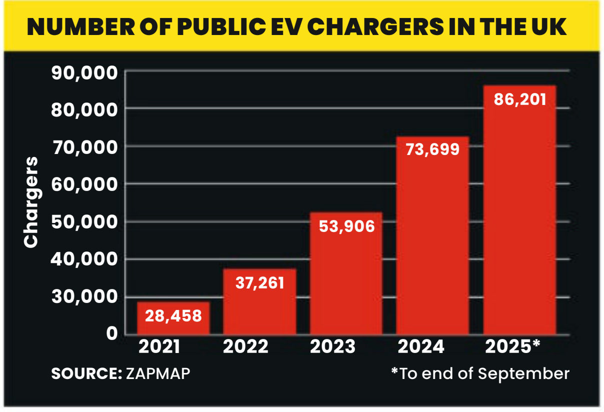
> "What surely awaits is a price war between the Chinese brands in the UK"

GETTY IMAGES

DRIVE ASSURED
EV09 FAB

CHARGER PROVIDERS WANT TO HOOK UP TO GRID FASTER

Network’s growth is being held back by slow grid approval, say firms


NUMBER OF PUBLIC EV CHARGERS IN THE UK

SOURCE: ZAPMAP

*To end of September

Delays in connecting chargers to the National Grid are a “substantial bottleneck” for the growth of EV charging infrastructure, claims the UK’s biggest charging body.

ChargeUK, whose members include BP Pulse, Gridserve and Ionity, says variations in working practices between the country’s 14 distribution network operators (DNOs) – which own, maintain and operate the energy network – are often to blame.

“Varying standards and slow processes are a significant problem,” said Jarrod Birch, ChargeUK’s head of policy. “We need renewed collaboration and focus to speed things up.”

There are currently more than 86,000 public charge points in the UK that vary from speeds of 3kW (slow) to 480kW (ultra-rapid).

Osprey, the UK’s third-largest operator, with almost 1500 rapid and ultra-rapid chargers, expanded its network by 150% last year but believes it could have grown faster with better support from DNOs.

“There is enough power to connect most public charging projects to the grid,” a spokesperson told Autocar. “The reason for time delays is simply personnel and process.

“The volume of public EV charger connections has increased sharply over the past few years, and it can take months for some DNOs to process applications and legals and schedule connections. Any part of the process, especially legal, that is not standardised across the DNOs adds time and delays.”

Problems experienced by charger providers connecting to the grid were highlighted recently by Surrey County Council. It plans to install 2000 public EV chargers by February 2028 but by September had installed just 375. The council said one of the main issues has been getting power connections in place.

Among those affected by the delays are residents of Farnham. They had been expecting the installation of four charge points by January but work had still not started by October.

However, there is hope for energy firms and EV owners. Last November, national energy regulator Ofgem set out proposals to overhaul the system for getting new projects connected to the energy system.

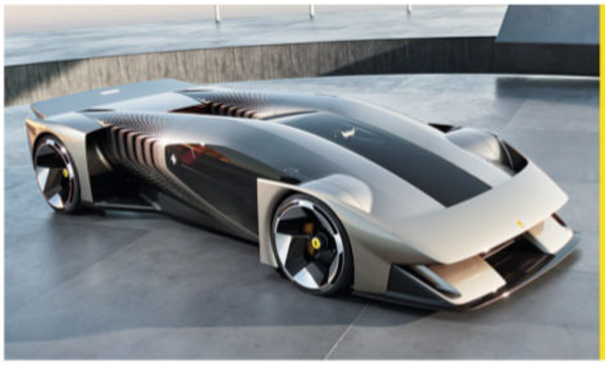
Its review will analyse each stage of Britain’s connections process to see where changes can be made to help approved projects connect faster.

“We are hopeful that Ofgem’s end-to-end connections review, the next steps for which are expected soon, will spur new momentum so that we can get on with the job of deploying ahead of demand,” said Birch.

The Energy Networks Association, which represents DNOs, claimed that ahead of the review’s findings, it has improved network access and changed its connection charges to reduce the up-front cost of connecting to the grid.

A spokesperson said: “The UK has seen a 22% growth in public EV charging points over the last year. Network operators are working hard to make it better, faster and easier for installers.”

JOHN EVANS



FUTURIST FERRARI F76 HAS TWO STEERING WHEELS

FERRARI HAS GIVEN a glimpse of its future with the digital-only F76, a radical design concept that can be controlled by two drivers.

Created with a form-follows-function approach, the digital-only concept has two cockpits, two steering wheels and drive-by-wire tech.

It also features several elements from other Ferraris, such as the F80’s floating front splitter and F40’s pop-up headlights.

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

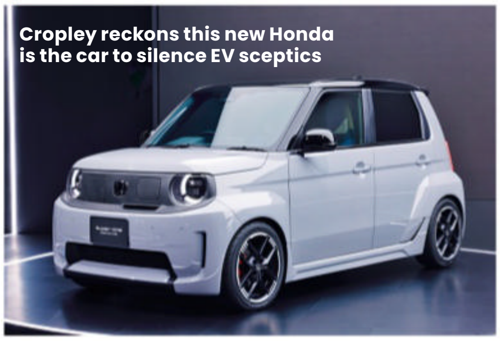
Pitchy ride aside, the 3 shows what's great about Polestar

SUNDAY

I've had a special interest in Polestar ever since the forward-looking Volvo spin-off got going seven or eight years ago. Early on, this optimistic, different-sounding business was fronted by former Audi and Volvo design chief Thomas Ingenlath, a man whose energy and sense of certainty were so powerful that they deserved to be bottled and sold to other car leaders. I still view Ingenlath, who departed last year because the profits refused to flow, as the prototype Polestar person, and whenever I think of him I hope his talent is being as well deployed today as it was back in those Swedish days.

Anyway, I borrowed a post-Ingenlath Polestar 3 for the weekend, searching in a sense for his spirit, and was pleased to find that I still admired the car – especially the cool, simple design inside and out and the glorious mechanical refinement. Apart from a tendency to pitch on unhelpful British roads, which I'd be desperate to dial out of the chassis were I a dynamics guru, it was nice to drive too. And the 330-mile range of this single-motor model suited me down to the ground.

I gather that profitability still eludes Polestar, despite lots of marketing brain strain, but I enjoyed this car better than many whose makers are in the black. No justice, is there?



Cropley reckons this new Honda is the car to silence EV sceptics

> **"When still a kid, he tried to supercharge his mother's Buick"**

MONDAY

I've just spent one of the most enjoyable evenings of the year recording a podcast at London's Royal Automobile Club with Matt Prior and special guests Ian Callum and David Fairbairn, former Jaguar design colleagues who now run the Callum design agency in Warwick. The pair held the occupants of the packed Committee Room in the palms of their hands with candid tales of old times at Jaguar and some never-heard stuff about the hurdles involved in starting your own car company. There was a terrific Q&A afterwards – one of the best bits about doing these things in the company of an audience. This is a podcast you'll really enjoy.

TUESDAY

If I never get into another of those mournful discussions you tend to have with EV sceptics about how electric cars have no soul, I definitely won't miss it. The suggestion doesn't sit well with someone who has done 12,300 miles in a Renault 5 and is pretty damned keen on the new battery-powered Fiat Grande Panda. But in future, if this subject comes up, I will simply scrabble through my phone pics, the way people always do, and pull out an image of the Honda Super-N, just launched in Tokyo as a concept but already confirmed as being bound for Britain. It's very quirky but oozes desirability and, because it's a Honda, it will work. I'm busting to drive one.

WEDNESDAY

Another London Motor Week milestone: Motoring Book of the Year, again run before a packed audience. This year's winner was Power Unleashed by Karl Ludvigsen, a magnificent three-volume history of supercharging and turbocharging by one of the greatest motoring writers who ever lived. And he himself was on hand to receive his prize. If I had been the interviewer, I would have asked him about how he tried to supercharge his mother's Buick when still a kid, but never mind.

It's decades since people started predicting that motoring book publishing was fading away, yet events like this make it clear the business is still thriving. How have publishers achieved this enduring health? By doing it better, with great writers, great design, superb picture research and skilful caption writing. Oh, and some reassuringly expensive pricing. The potboiler era is well and truly over.

AND ANOTHER THING

Loving the timeless nature of Bentley's combined anniversary for its three classic saloons: 60 years for the T Series, 40 years for the Turbo R and 20 years for the Flying Spur. Crewe has built three new 2025 Spurs in appropriate specs to celebrate. There's a unique grace to big, venerable saloons that needs to be appreciated. Whenever I see a seasoned Bentley or Rolls wafting through the traffic, I find myself pausing to watch.

GET IN TOUCH
steve.cropley@haymarket.com

PRIOR CONVICTION

Matt Prior

I'm containing my enthusiasm about the idea of a new small car class that's meant to save Europe's automotive industry.

European car makers have been lobbying the EU to let them sell cheaper cars again, citing the fact that the average age of cars in Europe is getting older and older, and arguing that the bloc's introduction of legislation that has made cars more expensive through mandating active safety kit and increasing levels of electrification is handing an advantage to Chinese car makers, which can offer those things more cheaply.

"In 2019, 49 cars sold for under €15,000 in Europe," Stellantis chairman John Elkann told the Automotive News Europe congress in June. "Now, it's just one." (His firm's own Fiat Panda.)

Faced with more expensive cars, Europeans have had three choices: buy the cheaper ones, which tend to be Chinese; borrow more money for locally made ones, which was more palatable when borrowing money was easy; or keep what they've got. More of us have been keeping what we've got, but none of those three choices does European car makers a favour now that credit is no longer cheap.

In September, the EU, not blind to how many of its citizens work in the car industry, showed it was listening. "Millions of Europeans want to buy affordable European cars," said the European Commission's German president, Ursula von der Leyen. "This is why we will propose to work with industry on a new small affordable cars initiative."

She even used Stellantis's proposed name for the new category, 'E-car', saying the 'E' stood for 'European', 'environmental' and 'economical'. Not 'electric', maybe notably, maybe not. "No matter what, the future is electric, and Europe will be part of it," she said.

Either way, this is good news, yes? We'll see.

Last man standing: EU laws have all but killed cheap cars

Perhaps like you, I like small cars. As a car enthusiast, I like that they're more fun to drive. As an engineer, I like that they use fewer materials. Former Renault Group boss Luca de Meo told us that small cars can have 75% less whole life environmental impact than bigger cars, which is effectively what EU legislation had been pushing people towards.

"A- and B-segment cars [meaning city cars and superminis] are not profitable any more, because auto makers have to produce cars dressed up like Christmas trees," de Meo said over the summer, having chosen to leave the industry. "It doesn't make a difference if it's a Clio or a big limo."

With credit cheap in the 2010s, choosing bigger and more expensive was fine. Not any more.

The big question in introducing a new car class, though, is what will be undone from the existing regulations. Because fitting increasing amounts of electrification and active safety kit is all that was preventing the profitable sale of those cars in the first place.

"It sounds like more red tape on top of existing red tape"

The EU's leader believes that "no matter what, the future is electric", which doesn't imply that small engines shorn of various filters that are cheap to make and maintain are in the offing, much as consumers might like them.

And car makers will face strong opposition from environmental pressure groups like Transport & Environment, as well as proponents of active safety systems, if they try to argue that cars shouldn't have them.

"We don't need another urban vehicle category," said Transport & Environment's director for cars, Lucien Mathieu. "It would be more for suburban or rural areas; therefore it needs to go on highways and therefore it needs to be safe. That's the challenge."

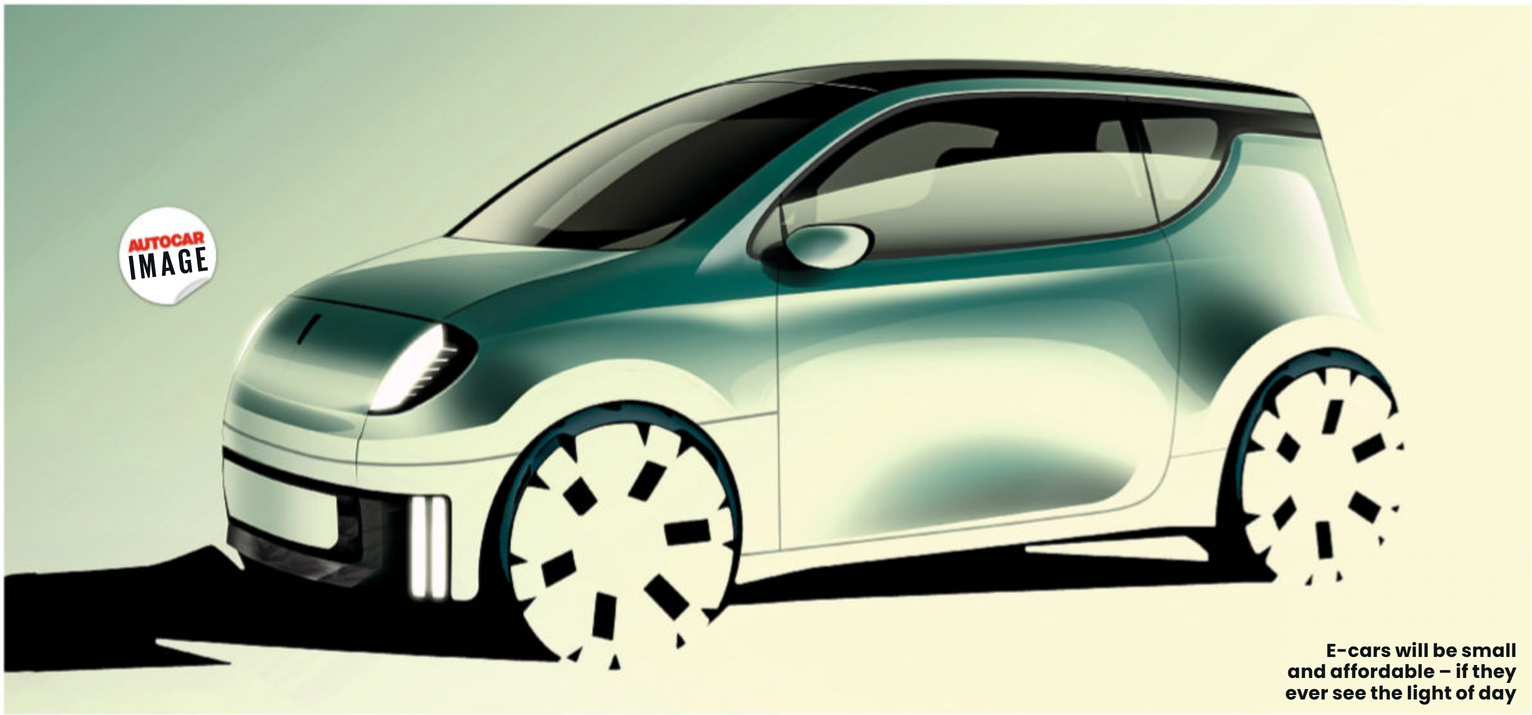
So we want a new class of small car that's still electrified and green and still safety system-equipped and yet also cheap enough to be made in and for Europe? That's a challenge, because it's precisely that set of criteria which can't be met at the moment.

The only way I see it working is if, say, cars under a certain size or weight or of a certain power output or efficiency rating are exempted from some existing legislation, being freed from the obligations to feature certain active safety systems, be connected and feature electrification or the latest combustion filtration.

Otherwise it sounds like more red tape on top of existing red tape: legislation to circumnavigate the legislation that manufacturers were right in saying would render these cars unfeasible in the first place yet which was introduced anyway.

We'll see what we get – and whether it will arrive in time.

GET IN TOUCH
matthew.prior@haymarket.com



E-cars will be small and affordable – if they ever see the light of day

RACING LINES

Damien Smith

Commanding win in Mexico put Norris back atop the F1 standings

When Lando Norris pulled his McLaren on to the grass in a puff of oil smoke at Zandvoort back in August, all appeared lost. Mechanical retirements in Formula 1 are so rare these days that we feared this would make all the difference in his cut-and-thrust duel with team-mate Oscar Piastri for the world championship.

The Australian won imperiously that day and opened up a significant 34-point lead at the top of the standings. Yet now, three months later, it's Norris who heads into the Brazilian Grand Prix this weekend with both the momentum and the slenderest of advantages. He is just a single point ahead of Piastri following an utterly dominant display in Mexico, with four left to play.

LANDO HOPEFUL OF GLORY

These are uncharted waters for the young McLaren duo as they fight for a title for the first time (last year barely counts for Norris, who was coming from too far back to really threaten Red Bull's Max Verstappen).

As the points table indicates, they are so equally matched. The deciding factor in Brazil, Las Vegas, Qatar and Abu Dhabi over the next month might well be who cracks first. For much of the long 24-race season, Piastri's ice-cold temperament and clinical ability to tap into McLaren's performance advantage gave him the edge. But now, just when it counts the most, the 24-year-old suddenly looks vulnerable. He has stood on the podium only once since his Dutch GP victory and in Austin and Mexico City toiled with relatively lacklustre form.

It's easy to forget how inexperienced Piastri still is in what is only his third F1 season. By contrast, 25-year-old Norris is in his seventh, and he is the one who now appears calm under the greatest of pressure. It's doubtful that either has listened to or read The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, but on a long-haul flight to or from one of the remaining races, perhaps doing so would help. I've always thought the advice offered on the front cover of Douglas Adams' electronic book that predicted the internet and smartphones way back in the 1970s is pertinent to just about any sticky moment in life, the universe and everything: 'Don't Panic.'

> "Just when it counts most, he suddenly looks vulnerable"

MAX STILL A FACTOR

Meanwhile, Max Verstappen remains an uncomfortable factor in the story. He was more than 100 points down on Piastri in the summer, but a revival in form since Laurent Mekies took the Red Bull helm from Christian Horner has pitched him back in the frame.

After a dominant win in Austin, the main talking point was whether Verstappen could string together what he admitted had to be a "perfect" run to steal an unlikely fifth crown. A timely and equally emphatic performance from Norris in Mexico has checked that thought for now. Verstappen is 36 points off Norris – more than the deficit that Norris faced to Piastri after Zandvoort. It's a lot to make up. But F1 usually throws up a twist or three at this time of year, and that will probably be the case on this occasion too. McLaren's duo are correct to remain wary of a driver who in adversity this term has enhanced his credentials as among the greatest of all time.

Hamilton still isn't loving life at Ferrari, 10 months later

TENSIONS ELSEWHERE

Beyond the title fight, there's a degree of scrutiny on both George Russell and Lewis Hamilton right now.

The distraction of Mercedes' open interest in securing the future services of Verstappen unsettled Russell over the summer, and the length of time it took for him to agree a renewed deal with the team even after the Dutchman had pledged his loyalty to Red Bull (for now) indicates a degree of edge in the relationship.

In Mexico, Russell was exasperated at his team's reluctance to make the correct tactical move in ordering rookie team-mate Kimi Antonelli to let him past during a series of tense radio calls. The team eventually got there but too late to allow Russell to defend fifth place from Piastri. Before the chequered flag, he stood by his word and let Antonelli back ahead.

At 27 and free from the shadow of former team-mate Hamilton, Russell has proven he is a gilt-edged team leader and for my money has performed at a level comparable to the three championship contenders this year. But there now appears to be a strange and altered dynamic in his long-standing alliance with Mercedes.

As for Hamilton, he still hasn't properly clicked with Ferrari. The Mexico City GP distilled his frustration: a promising third on the grid, right behind team-mate Charles Leclerc, but then a messy error in the race compounded by Ferrari's lack of aid from the pitwall to help him avoid a penalty. It turned what could have been a first GP podium in red into a disconsolate eighth. Will this awkward narrative ever turn?

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

DANGEROUS DESIGN

Like a lot of your journalists and readers, I've been watching trends in car design with dismay in recent years. The obsession with 'clean' interiors with almost all buttons removed is abhorrent; it's a victory for styling over common sense.

I was always led to believe that design was more than just making things pretty. Good design should include consideration of how an object is actually used. Design of control interfaces in a car is vitally important, to make things safe and effective. But I see no sign of any such thought in most modern cars.

Touchscreens with tiny buttons that need fine control over input might work well in a design studio, on a static test vehicle with nothing else needing focus, but not so much in real life, with vibrations, movement and the distraction of actually driving the vehicle.

Even Volvo, previously obsessed with safety, is now making its cars unsafe to operate. Why are people not screaming about this more?

I've been lucky enough to own multiple BMWs in recent years, and I've become very used to the iDrive controller there. It's easy to use without looking at it and it's possible to navigate through fixed menus quickly while still watching the road. You know, the point of the car in the first place. Now the stylists at BMW have decided they need to throw away this massive ergonomic advantage and regress to the mean, following the touchscreen crowd.

At what point are these 'visionary' stylists plaguing the car industry going to be held to account for the additional road deaths that I'm sure they must be causing?

Steve McIntyre
Cambridge

COMPOUND ERROR

Each time I read about yet another car maker reversing its decision to de-button its cabins because it has "listened to customers", my heart sinks. Why? First, I presume that at some point a bigwig decided not to ask customers what they wanted, or did but chose to ignore them. Either case is dispiriting. Second, I guess that us poor sods, having already paid for the development costs of something we didn't want, are now having to pay for the costs of restoring something that we never wanted to lose. Talk about manufacturers taking the piss!

Andrew Yeomanson
Via email

Letter of the week

THE REAL REASON OLD CARS RULE

I must take exception to the opening of your article 'Are warranties warranted?' (8 October), specifically the claim that our cars are 2.5 years older on average due to perceived reliability and the cost of living squeeze. While that's true, there's another reason any driver will spot immediately: we've lost trust in modern cars.

Running something from the 2000s to early 2010s is, frankly, peak internal combustion. Those cars hit the sweet spot: reliable, repairable and free of overbearing tech. Any garage can fix them and parts are plentiful.

I say this as someone who has driven a Jaguar I-Pace company car for five years. Mine is great, but let's not kid ourselves: reliability across the latest wave of tech-heavy EVs has been patchy at best. How many Porsche Taycans have you seen on the back of a trailer? And who is going to repair them in 10 years, never mind 20?

Hybrids are even worse. Fancy taking a 12-year-old Vauxhall hybrid to your local mechanic? Is the problem electrical, mechanical or gearbox-related? Who knows? I understand that Ferraris will have specialists into the future, but everyday cars risk becoming disposable far too soon. Meanwhile, a 2010 Golf could run forever.

Our 'other car' is a thoroughly unexciting 2015 Seat Alhambra diesel – owned since new, 60,000 miles, 50mpg and utterly dependable. When the touchscreen died, I simply fitted a Sony stereo like it was 1998. Bliss! I even spent £900 detailing it, because, with three kids, there's simply nothing newer that makes sense.

Greg Durrans, via email

HISTORY IN THE BIN

I wish to draw attention to the future poor quality of cars' history files.

I purchased a new Alpine A110 Pure four years ago. Recently I part-exchanged it for a same-year A110 S at a local dealer. I had kept every service sheet, warranty work receipt, add-on instructions and even every petrol receipt since day one. But the dealer informed me that, due to GDPR [General Data Protection Regulation], I couldn't pass on this comprehensive history file to the next owner. The only documentation allowed was the service sheets, which were then photocopied with a cover over my address, so not even the originals were passed on. I was happy to sign disclaimers to allow my address to be passed on, but this was declined.

Could you give some clarity for dealers around this issue to stop all this history being lost?

Mick Anderson
Via email

The National Franchised Dealers Association declined to comment

Steve will miss iDrive dial – but, as Andrew suggests, it may not be gone for long

Speed isn't the main safety issue, says Peter. Police disagree

Inductive charging has been proven perfectly safe

SLOW ON THE UPTAKE

It's incredibly dispiriting to read of the plans of various police forces and charities who are desperate to infantilise the UK road network with more average speed cameras and more speed limit reductions (News, 22 October). While the aim is laudable, it's clear there's next to zero appetite to do anything other than slow traffic rather than deal with the actual causes of accidents.

We already have a problem with road users who won't drive at the speed limit in 50mph and 60mph areas, so the last thing we need is more cameras. As for 20mph limits, I can see the argument for school start and end times, but what about evenings, weekends and school holidays? I guess a variable limit is too hard for us plebs to understand.

Anyone who lives near Banbury will have experience of relatively wide, well-sighted roads having the limit reduced from 30 to 20mph. It's mealy-mouthed nimby madness, and I was really pleased to read that Wiltshire councillor Martin Smith has had a hard time dealing with all the red tape to reduce limits.

It would be very refreshing to see Autocar present the other side of the argument, highlighting a more reasoned and balanced approach to road safety and the need for free-flowing and efficient road networks. Detailed analysis of the road death statistics would be a good start.

Peter Worth
Via email

Of the fatal collisions for which police recorded 'road safety factors' in 2024 (about a quarter of the total), 59% were attributed to speed, 52% to behaviour or inexperience, 34% to distraction or impairment and 13% to the road – KC

HEART OF THE ISSUE

I read with interest your article on Mercedes and others developing induction charging for EVs, with a rate of 11kW being mentioned (News, 15 October). My interest here is that I have a pacemaker and I was told induction fields can be dangerous in proximity to my implanted device. How can these wireless chargers be guaranteed to be safe for people like me if they are installed in public places?

David Irving
Via email

In defining its J2954 standard for wireless power transfer, the Society of Automotive Engineers tested "the susceptibility of representative medical devices to electromagnetic emissions" and found that field levels inside and around the vehicle were low enough to have no effect – KC

MIND THE GAP

Having taken delivery of my fourth new Mazda MX-5 after a break of a few years, I've started to understand the demise of the two-seat roadster.

In the 1960s, the Lotus Elan was a world away from the norm of the day: Ford Anglias, Austin 1100s et al. It must truly have seemed like an incredible feat of engineering.

Now my Mazda 3 is as fast as the MX-5 in the real world, smoother, with equally sharp handling, and competent in every way, and the MX-5 is starting to seem very much a niche product whose main benefits are its soft top and tiny size.

I will be keeping it, but my how the ordinary car has improved!

Robert McFarland
Via email

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

GREAT REASONS TO BUY

Next week's issue

ON SALE 12 NOVEMBER

FIRST DRIVE

HYUNDAI IONIQ 6 N

South Korea's electric BMW M3 rival arrives with 641bhp. We drive it – and see if the saloon is as mind-blowing as its Ioniq 5 N SUV sibling

INTERVIEW

MARKUS HAUPT

The new boss in Martorell on growing Cupra – and his plans for Seat

INSIGHT

INSIDE TANNISTEST

Join us at the secret 'motor show' where Cars of the Year are made

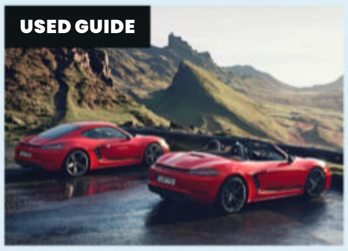
EVERY WEEK

ROAD TEST

BMW XM

The most controversial M car so far finally faces our toughest test

USED GUIDE



PORSCHE 718

Latest Boxster and Cayman now offer thrills at bargain prices

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

AUTOCAR

The original car magazine, published since 1895 'in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage'

EDITORIAL
Email autocar@haymarket.com
Editor Mark Tisshaw
Editor-in-chief Steve Cropley
Magazine editor Rachel Burgess
Associate editor James Attwood
Managing editor Sami Shah
Editor-at-large Matt Prior
Digital editor Murray Scullion
Deputy editor Felix Page
Road test editor Matt Saunders
Deputy road test editor Richard Lane
Road tester Illya Verpraet
News editor Will Rimell
Staff writers Charlie Martin, Sam Phillips, Jack Warrick
Editorial assistants Danny Davies, Leonardo Stracca, Alex Wolstenholme
Chief sub-editor Kris Culmer
Senior syndication manager Tom Evans
Group art editor Stephen Hopkins
Art editor Sarah Özgül
Designer Tara Tuohy
Senior photographer Max Edleston
Photographer Jack Harrison
Videographer Sergiu Avram
Picture editor Ben Summerell-Youde
Content creator apprentice Sophia Grace

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
European editor Greg Kable
Motorsport editor Damien Smith
Business correspondent Nick Gibbs
Technology correspondent Jesse Crosse
Senior correspondent John Evans
Senior contributing writer Andrew Frankel
Regular contributors John Bradshaw, Richard Bremner, Alastair Clements, Tim Dickson, James Disdale, Peter Liddiard, Peter McSean, Richard Webber

MEDIA ENQUIRIES
Email autocar@haymarket.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Tel 0344 848 8816
Overseas +44 (0)1604 251450
Email subscriptions.team@haymarket.com

SYNDICATION ENQUIRIES
Tel +44 (0)1962 867705
Contact Simon Fox (simon@foxsyndication.com)

LICENSING ENQUIRIES
Contact Kate Hannam (kate.hannam@haymarket.com)

BACK ISSUES
Tel 0344 848 8816
Email help@autocar.themagazineshop.com

ADVERTISING
Head of trading and agency development Richard Potton (richard.potton@haymarket.com)
Account manager (display) Millie Remie (millie.remie@haymarket.com)

PUBLISHING
Newstrade marketing manager Isabella McDermid
Newstrade marketing executive Lance Pereira

PRODUCTION
Tel +44 (0)20 8267 5639
Head of production operations Trevor Simpson
Group production manager Ailsa Donovan

MANAGEMENT
Managing director Rachael Prasher
Marketing director Darren Pitt

© 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Autocar, Motor, Autocar & Motor are registered trademarks.
Circulation enquiries: Frontline Ltd, 1st Floor, Stuart House, St John's Street, Peterborough, PE1 5DD (01733 555161). Printed by William Gibbons, Wolverhampton. Registered as a newspaper with the Royal Mail. Member of the ABC. ISSN 1355-8293.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form except by permission. The publisher makes every effort to ensure contents are correct but cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Unsolicited material is submitted to Autocar entirely at the owner's risk; the publisher accepts no responsibility for loss or damage.
With regret, competitions and promotional offers, unless otherwise stated, are not available to readers outside the UK and Eire.

GPSR EU RP
Manufacturer: Haymarket Media Group Limited.
Frankfurter Str. 3d (ARTmax) 38122 Braunschweig
+49 (0)531 38004-0
info@haymarket.de

General Product Safety 2023/988: The use of our product under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use, including the actual duration of use, does not present any risk or only the minimum risks compatible with the product's use, which are considered acceptable and consistent with a high level of protection of the health and safety of consumers.

CHRISTMAS
EARLY BIRD OFFER!

Save up to 20% extra!

Make their Christmas with a weekly dose of automotive joy

Take advantage of our Christmas Early Bird offer and buy a gift subscription from just £30.99 for 13 issues, saving £33 on the shop price.

Crafted exclusively for those who live and breathe cars, Autocar is the present that will rev up their festive season.

TIME-LIMITED EARLY BIRD
OFFER ENDS **1 DECEMBER**

Order today

Call 0344 848 8807 quoting X25EBPA
Visit www.themagazineshop.com/X25EBPA/aca

SCAN ME TO ORDER

CLASSIC & SPORTS CAR
FERRARI'S FINEST
WHAT CAR?
USED CAR OF THE YEAR

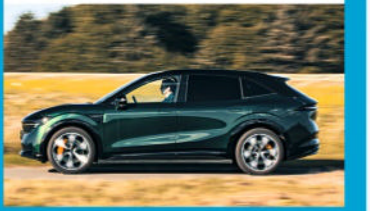
See great offers on our other titles at themagazineshop.com

VERDICT NEW 296 SPECIALE
FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK
AUTOCAR
EST. 1895 | AUTOCAR.CO.UK | 29 OCTOBER 2025
NEW TT DRIVE
EXCLUSIVE The future of Audi –
PLUS Audi's boss: why we had to change
911 'THE BEST CAR EVER'
DRIVEN VOLVO'S ODDBALL SALOON
FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK
AUTOCAR
EST. 1895 | AUTOCAR.CO.UK | 22 OCTOBER 2025
PORSCHE vs BMW, AUDI
Is the new Macan still the best of its breed?
+ BEST EV CHARGERS IN THE UK
THE FOCUS HAS GONE – TRY THIS INSTEAD
SCOOP: DACIA'S MAKING AN ESTATE
SAVE 52%
IF YOU ORDER BY 1 DECEMBER

TERMS AND CONDITIONS This is a UK-only offer; for overseas offers, please visit themagazineshop.com/X25EBPA/aca or call +44 (0) 1604 251 461. All savings are based on the UK cover price of £4.99 and is correct as of November 2025. Please allow up to 35 days for delivery of your first issue. Direct Debit rates are valid for one year, after which they are subject to change; should prices change, we will inform you in writing. Should you wish to cancel your subscription, it will be cancelled on expiry of the current term, which will not be refundable, other than in exceptional circumstances. Details of the Direct Debit Guarantee are available upon request. **Offer ends 1 December 2025.**

FIRST DRIVES

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS



26 **ZEEKR 7X**

28 **AUDI Q5 E-HYBRID**

32 **BYD SEALION 7**

38 **PEUGEOT 208**

HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time – either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production specification. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

ALPINE
W-156-KA
92

TESTED 23.9.25, NORTH JUTLAND, DENMARK **DELIVERIES** SPRING 2026

ALPINE A390

Is new SUV more than just a sporty-looking Scenic?

It's impossible to have a bad time driving a car on a frozen lake. By extension, it's impossible to have a bad time driving a car on a wet handling circuit, which emulates the former. All the car's natural behaviours are amplified to comical proportions but in a friendly, easily controllable way. No wonder I had a good time when I drove a prototype of the Alpine A390 at a Michelin proving ground in April.

And the A390 needs to be good to drive, since it will step into the flagship role at the Renault Group's performance brand once the A110 sports coupé goes away next year.

Now I'm driving the real thing on real roads to see if it still entertains away from a low-friction surface. In fact, I'm driving it at the annual Car of the Year test, set in the emotional vacuum that is northern Denmark. Never mind the Nürburgring – if it can entertain here...

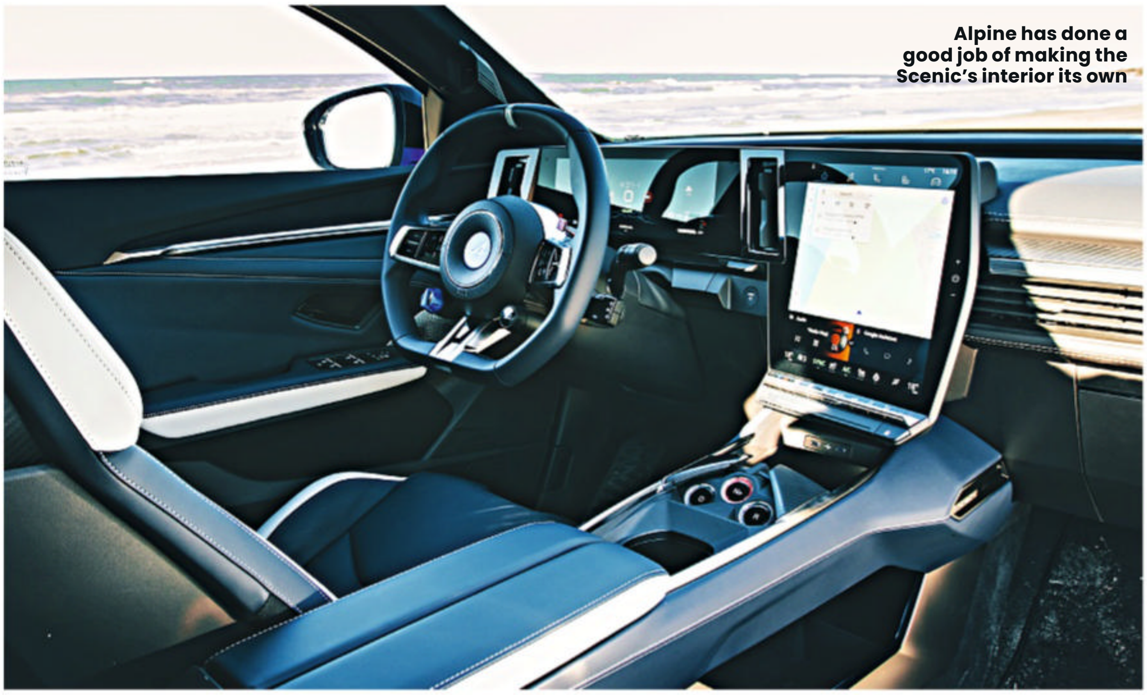
Anyway, back to the car. The A390 is an electric crossover, which doesn't bode well for entertainment, but it is a "racing car in a suit", dixit Alpine. And it probably is time for the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N to get some competition in the practical-yet-fun EV space.

Indeed, the A390 is a very similar size to the Hyundai (just 100mm shorter, at 4.61m), albeit quite a different shape. It's clearly trying to emulate the A110 with its curvy bonnet, central spine and visor-shaped rear windscreen. I'm not convinced it has worked, but you can be the judge of that.

When I drove that prototype, the interior was still covered up, but now we can see what we suspected then: the dashboard is the same as the one in the Renault Scenic. However, it has been successfully lifted up with posher materials and a different steering wheel.

The Scenic is already pretty good

A390 can't entertain at everyday speeds, unlike the Ioniq 5 N



Alpine has done a good job of making the Scenic's interior its own

> "The triple motors don't immediately prove their worth. It feels neutral at best"

TESTER'S NOTE

Alpine has its own take on EV noises. There are no simulated gears, but the synthetic noise is supposedly inspired by the A110. Like a lot of EVs, it sounds a lot like a tube train. It's too loud and I turned it off quite quickly. **IV**

inside, and with Alpine's signature soft blue leather, this feels suitably upmarket. The screens are the same as in the Scenic, which is to say intuitive, quick and full-featured.

The hard-backed bucket seats are unique to the A390. They're comfy enough but lack a bit of support.

More of a problem is just how dark and confined the A390's interior feels. The beltline is high and the glasshouse low, and that feeling is even worse in the back, where the privacy glass lets in very little light and the front seats block what's coming from the front.

The knee room isn't stellar, but boot space is slightly up on the Ioniq 5 N's, at 532 litres.

The drivetrain layout is at least interesting. Naturally, there's a big battery under the floor, but it's not just the one from the Scenic, even though it is a similar size. This one is made in France (down to the cells) and developed to continuously be able to deliver full power, down to a low state of charge.

Unlike the Ioniq 5 N, though, the electrical architecture remains at 400V. Then again, the maximum charging rate of 190kW isn't much slower than the 800V Hyundai's.

Where things get interesting is with the motors, because there are not two but three of them: an asynchronous one at the front and two back-to-back permanent magnet ones at the rear.

In the standard GT model they all provide 132bhp each, although the one at the front makes more torque, at 176lb ft, while the rears make 156lb ft each. The GTS model has three 154bhp motors with 221lb ft at the front and 193lb ft each at the back.

That was enough for plenty of sideways fun on the handling circuit, but on less-than-inspiring roads the A390 has more trouble expressing itself. The steering feels Renault rather than Alpine, with a glassy sub-limit feel and slightly nervous responses off-centre. In the 5-derived A290 hot hatch, the steering comes alive when you really lean on it, but the A390's limits are much higher, and it's a much bigger car, meaning opportunities to do so are rarer.

The triple motors don't immediately prove their worth either. Even in the Sport and Track modes (the latter also puts the stability control into a looser setting), the A390 feels neutral at best. It's nowhere near as playful as the Ioniq 5 N.

For all that, it rides reasonably well despite big wheels and passive dampers. It's slightly busy and wooden but well within acceptable bounds for a sporting model.

It's possible that on more varied roads the A390 will reveal a more layered character. Even if it does, the strength of the Ioniq 5 N is that despite its enormous capability it's fun at normal speeds, and we were hoping that the A390's torque-vectoring set-up could take that even further.

UK prices haven't been announced yet, but in France the GT will be a good deal cheaper than the Ioniq 5 N (€67,500, or £59,000) and the more powerful GTS will cost exactly the same (€78,000, or £68,000). With 313 or 345 miles of range, it ought to go a little farther than the Ioniq 5 N too. But I fear it's going to need to do more to make us forget the sensational A110.

ILLYA VERPRAET

TECH SPEC

ALPINE A390 GTS

Novel and classy but needs some more exuberance from its torque-vectoring motors to really shine

Price £68,000 (est)
Engine Asynchronous motor (f), two permanent magnet synchronous motors (r)
Power 463bhp
Torque 608lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2121kg
0-62mph 3.9sec
Top speed 137mph
Battery 89kWh (usable)
Range, economy 313 miles, 3.0mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 3%
Rivals Hyundai Ioniq 5 N, Kia EV6 GT, Porsche Macan 4S Electric

TESTED 23.9.25, NORTH JUTLAND, DENMARK **DELIVERIES** SUMMER 2026

ZEEKR 7X

Yet another electric SUV moseys over from China – but this is a fancy one

Here we are again, then. Zeekr is the latest Chinese marque planning to elbow its way into the UK car market. Owned by Geely (and therefore sharing an overlord with Volvo, Polestar, Lotus and Smart), Zeekr was established in 2021 in its domestic market, chiefly as a Tesla rival.

Zeekr is already well entrenched in EV-dominated European markets including Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands and is making inroads into France and Denmark, and its global expansion will continue with the introduction of the 7X to the UK next year.

The 7X is a large electric SUV that sits on a version of the SEA platform that underpins the Polestar 4 and Smart #5. At just under 4.8 metres long, it's comparable to cars like the Skoda Enyaq and Tesla Model Y.

Although UK specs and pricing haven't been confirmed, we would expect that the Core model, with its 71kWh lithium-iron-phosphate battery and WLTP range of 298 miles, will start at roughly £45,000. The Long Range version will get the same rear-wheel-drive set-up but with a 94kWh nickel-manganese-cobalt battery for 382 miles of range for around £50,000.

We drove the top-spec Privilege, which gets the same 94kWh battery but uses a dual-motor powertrain with an eye-roll inducing output of 637bhp. It's good for a WLTP range of 337 miles, while pricing is likely to be around £55,000.

You can't miss the Tesla influence when you slide into the 7X. The huge, 16in central touchscreen dominates the dashboard and is your window to all of the car's controls, including Pet mode, Camping mode and every other mode – and your steering wheel adjustment, which is annoying. Oh, and it gets a Qualcomm Snapdragon 8295 processor! Oof. Check out those processing speeds…

It's a slightly boring, predictable-looking cabin, but in this high-spec car there are some subtle crystal- and metal-effect trim highlights, and it does feel rather classy. Maybe the crystal bits are a tad chintzy, but you can see and feel that this is no Leapmotor or Jaecoo. Zeekr is out for Tesla, BMW and Audi, and it has the perceived quality and equipment to back that up.

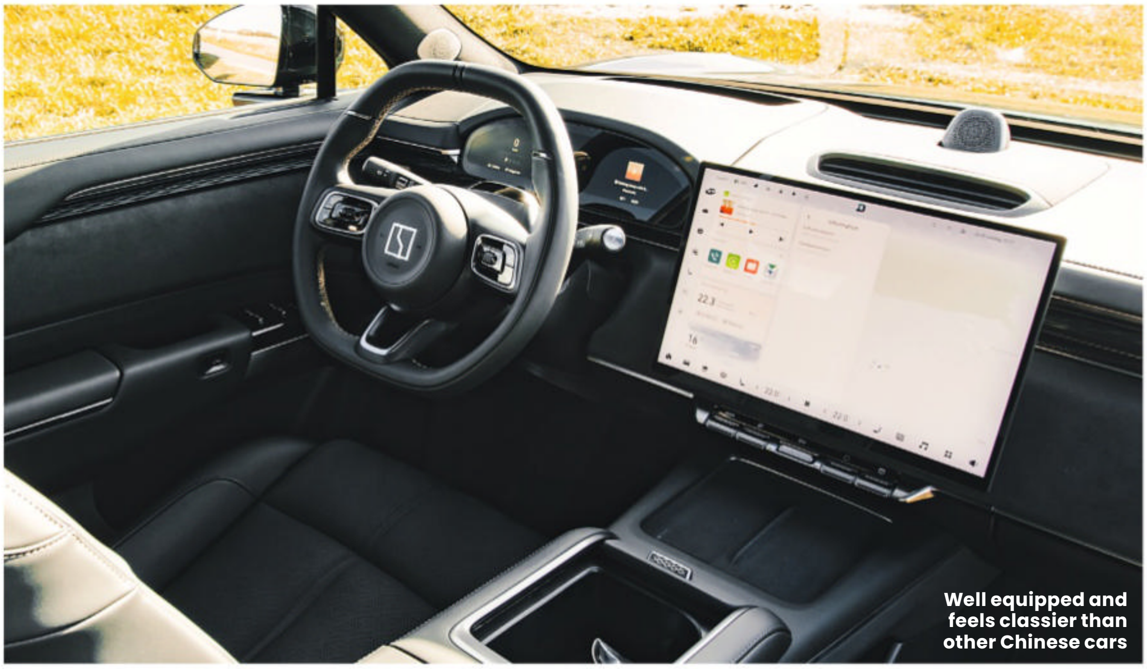
This range-topper gets eight-way electrically adjustable seats that are heated and cooled, a huge panoramic roof, two cooled wireless phone chargers, matrix

You can't fling a 7X through bends like you can a Model Y

TESTER'S NOTE

There are three levels of regeneration, including a one-pedal driving mode. You have to change them on the touchscreen, though, which is less useful than having steering wheel paddles. **VP**

“Peculiarly wafty and soft-edged, it has something of a wallowy, old-school SUV feel to it”



Well equipped and feels classier than other Chinese cars

LED headlights and all of the semi-autonomous driving systems you would expect. An optional pack also added a 36in head-up display and a 21-speaker stereo to our test car.

The charging stuff is impressive. An 800V electrical architecture lets the 7X accept up to 360kW from a DC rapid charger, making it one of the fastest-charging EVs on sale, capable of a 10-80% top-up in as little as 16 minutes. A heat pump, 22kW AC charging and vehicle-to-load capability are also thrown in.

It’s not short of space, the 7X. There’s masses of it in the heated back seats, which also recline electrically and have their own climate controls. The doors open to 90deg for great access, too, which is useful if you’ve got small kids to wrangle into child seats.

The boot is also huge, with a broad, deep boot floor, offering 539 litres of space – almost as much as you get in the Enyaq.

How does the 7X drive? Well, given its abundance of power, it’s a peculiarly wafty, soft-edged car, thanks to the standard adaptive air suspension that brings a lolloping ride comfort, even in Sport mode. It has something of a wallowy, old-school SUV feel to it, which is good for soaking up bigger bumps, although there’s still some patter at lower speeds.

The long-travel accelerator pedal is surprisingly laggardly in its response, too. Again, even in Sport mode you feel like you have to really push a long way before you access that deep well of power.

On the evidence of this early drive at a Car of the Year test event in Denmark, it seems clear that Zeekr has the edge on the Model Y for ride comfort, but Tesla certainly has put a bit more gumption and confidence into the handling of its family SUV.

Of course, if you do ask for full performance from the 7X, you get, well, a huge wash of power to carry you up the road at a truly ridiculous pace. At no point does this feel like a car that needs a 3.8sec 0-62mph sprint time, nor is there any of the handling tactility that you need to make such vast performance accessible and enjoyable.

Zeekr is far from the only brand doing it, but we really need to get over the strange craze of delivering plainly unnecessary levels of power in everyday family cars. Just because it can be done, doesn’t mean it should be done.

We haven’t yet had a chance to try a single-motor, rear-wheel-drive 7X, but given that they have more modest yet perfectly respectable performance and lower prices, they seem the far saner options in the range. The squidgy yet comically rapid dual-motor Privilege is impressive in some aspects but never feels like a sports SUV.

The way the 7X drives is merely okay, then, and is the last reason that you’re likely to buy one. Its appeal is all in the roomy and smartly finished cabin, the tech (both infotainment and charging) and the standard equipment.

It really does feel, both in its execution and character, perhaps a little too much like a Tesla clone. But it’s a pretty good clone that will no doubt undercut its American nemesis/inspiration by a useful amount, so it’s not hard to see it gaining fans over here and indeed throughout Europe.

VICKY PARROTT

TECH SPEC

ZEEKR 7X PRIVILEGE

Classy inside, spacious and stuffed with tech, charges faster than most EVs and has a decent range – but you won’t buy it for the way it drives

Price £55,000 (est)
Engine Asynchronous motor (f), permanent magnet synchronous motor (r)
Power 637bhp
Torque 524lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2435kg
0-62mph 3.8sec
Top speed 130mph
Battery 100/94kWh (total/usable)
Range, economy 337 miles, 3.1mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 3%
Rivals Audi Q6 E-tron, Tesla Model Y

TESTER'S NOTE
This PHEV has 433 litres of boot space, down from 470 in other Q5 Sportback models, due to the extra space for the battery. That rises to 1300 litres if you fold the rear seats. **JA**

TESTED 17.10.25, BRIXEN, ITALY **DELIVERIES** NOW

AUDI Q5 E-HYBRID

Big SUV gains plug-in hybrid powertrain to tempt company car drivers

The plug-in hybrid renaissance continues: in the UK, sales are up 38% year on year to account for 10.9% of the market total, while diesels now barely make up 5%. So while the third-generation Audi Q5 was launched in the UK earlier this year with a choice of mildly hybridised petrol and diesel engines, it's the new PHEV version that could be key to the SUV's long-term prospects.

The Q5 E-hybrid is now reaching the UK, but our first taste came on the continent from a German-spec model in coupé-esque Sportback form. Audi's E-hybrid powertrain features a 248bhp 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo petrol engine and a 74bhp electric motor mounted within the seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox for a total system output of 295bhp – a welcome extra dose of whack compared with the 201bhp diesel. Like all the other Q5 models, it features Audi's Quattro Ultra four-wheel drive system, which uses a wet multi-plate clutch.

The motor is powered by a 20.7kWh (usable) battery, which gives the Sportback version an electric-only range of 62 miles. That's slightly more than the BMW X3 30e PHEV manages but much less than the Mercedes-Benz GLC 300e's 80 miles. The battery can be charged at up to 11kW on AC power, allowing for a 0-100% fill in two and a half hours.

Of course, for best results with a PHEV, forget EV mode and opt for hybrid mode. In the case of the Q5's E-hybrid system, this uses road data and route planning information to automatically decide which power sources to use when. You can also use a slider on the touchscreen to set a minimum charge level for the battery to maintain.

Due to the foreign spec of our test car, we can't yet give a definitive verdict on how efficient the powertrain is, but we saw about 70mpg on an extended run. There are steering wheel paddles to adjust the level of energy recuperated under braking.

Still, in an age when PHEV models are increasingly seen as an alternative to diesels for company car drivers, what's just as important is that the Q5 Sportback serves the role of a commensurate long-distance cruiser well.

The powertrain is responsive and always has ample power when called on, aided by the extra burst of electric torque, and you have to try really hard to make the engine sound like it's working. The transition from electric to combustion power is seamless too.

As noted in our road test of the regular-shape diesel Q5 (Autocar, 14 May), the interior represents a step back from its predecessors, having a little too much gloss plastic and relying on large touchscreens, but everything is easy to use and it's all perfectly comfortable.

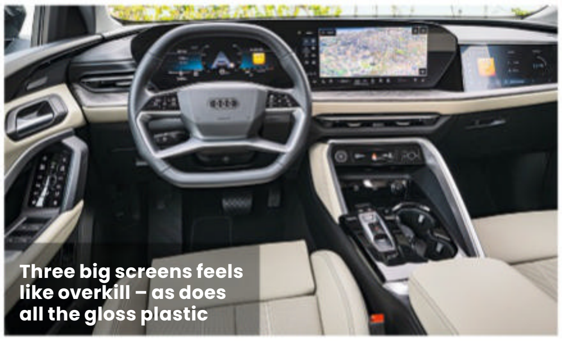
There isn't as much space in the rear as in some rivals, especially in slope-roofed Sportback guise. As usual with SUV-coupés, we would question the worth of paying a good chunk extra purely for that extra dash of style.

The ride is decent on standard suspension (we had previously only tested air-sprung models), but all Q5 E-hybrids sold in the UK will sit on firmer sports suspension.

Cabin isolation is good, which helps when the car is running on electric power alone. You can feel the weight caused by the PHEV gubbins, especially when cornering with any level of gusto, but for everyday driving it's hugely competent.

The PHEV feels like it could be the most convincing version of the Q5, but we will need time in a UK-spec car on home turf to know whether the sums will add up.
JAMES ATTWOOD

Unflappable under duress; power sources are neatly integrated



Three big screens feels like overkill – as does all the gloss plastic

TECH SPEC

AUDI Q5 SPORTBACK E-HYBRID QUATTRO SPORT

Won't win plaudits for dynamism but is a comfortable, quiet and thoroughly competent long-journey cruiser

Price £60,840
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1984cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor
Power 295bhp at 5000-6500rpm
Torque 280lb ft at 1600-4500rpm
Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 2150kg
0-62mph 6.2sec
Top speed 155mph
Battery 25.9/20.7kWh (total/usable)
Economy 110.9mpg
Electric range 62 miles
CO_2, tax band 58g/km, 17%
Rivals Lexus NX 450h+, Mercedes GLC 300e

TESTED 18.10.25, IBIZA, SPAIN **DELIVERIES** JANUARY 2026

SEAT ARONA

Does this aged former class leader still cut it after these latest updates?

Ride is very comfy, the car ironing out bumps nonchalantly

Touchscreen can be laggy but isn't a key control component

When it arrived eight years ago, the Seat Arona shot right to the top of the burgeoning crossover class. But the game has moved on: the Ford Puma has proved that such cars can be fun to drive, while the Dacia Duster and Fiat Grande Panda have demonstrated that going cheap doesn't have to mean going undesirable – leaving the staid Arona in murky waters.

The headline change is a restyle that's intended to emphasise the Arona's SUV-ness, bringing a more angular front end. The round foglight housings that were a signature of the Arona's higher trim levels are gone, with the fogs moved into the lower area of the grille. Whether it's successful is a matter of personal preference, but I feel it has lost a defining design feature and therefore a bit of character. It's all a bit anonymous, especially compared with the Ibiza supermini.

Inside it has been untouched, so it continues to have one of the most intuitive user interfaces in its class. There are loads of proper buttons and they're satisfyingly clicky. It's much easier to activate a seat heater or bump up the air-con than in rivals such as the Puma, which has ditched physical controls for a massive touchscreen. Seat deserves praise for sticking to its guns.

It is, however, snoozeworthy. Amorphous bits of black plastic abound and it feels especially dated against big personalities such as the bamboo-trimmed Grande Panda and the chunky-looking Duster. It's a case of functionality over form – but at least everything works excellently, particularly when you are on the move and need to make quick tweaks to key functions.

Two engines will be available in the UK. The range opens with a turbocharged 1.0-litre three-cylinder unit with either 94bhp or 113bhp. The former version comes with a five-speed manual gearbox, the latter a choice of a six-speed manual or a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic. There's also a turbocharged 1.5-litre four-pot, which we're testing here, with 148bhp and the seven-speed 'box.

Its standout quality is its ease of use, with plenty of grunt at low revs and good flexibility at higher speeds. It's torquier than the 1.0-litre engine and delivers peak torque earlier in its rev range (1500rpm compared with 2000rpm), so it's better at building pace from a standstill – but not significantly so.

In normal driving it's remarkably refined too, sending little noise or vibration into the cabin. Under harsher loads it generates a bit more din than the triple, but it's smooth. There's a noticeable delay before the gearbox kicks down, though, which undermines refinement somewhat.

The Arona's ride and handling balance is very well judged for a small SUV. Bumps are ironed out effectively and there isn't too much body roll through bends or vertical movement over crests, just a bit of squidge through tighter bends.

The steering is accurate, if overly assisted and lacking in much texture. If it's fun you want, look to the Puma – or just buy a low-slung hatchback that has been set up for such exploits. Sure, the Arona can be hustled if you really need it to, but there isn't much pleasure to be gained from doing so, and it feels at its best when plodding along.

In all, the Arona is a comfortable and effective mode of transport, but it doesn't feel more than a means to an end. It would slot into life very happily, but as a member of the supporting cast rather than the protagonist. And that's roughly where it sits in the class too: no longer the default go-to option but still worth a look.

CHARLIE MARTIN

TECH SPEC

SEAT ARONA 1.5 TSI 150 STYLE DSG

Comfortable and easygoing, if rather dreary. Might struggle to find a niche against more stylish, cheaper or tech-focused rivals

Price £27,000 (est)
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1498cc, turbocharged, petrol
Power 148bhp at 5000-6000rpm
Torque 184lb ft at 1500-3500rpm
Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic, FWD
Kerb weight 1268kg
0-62mph 8.3sec
Top speed 132mph
Economy 50.4mpg
CO$_2$, tax band 127-136g/km, 33%
Rivals Renault Captur, Vauxhall Mokka

TESTER'S NOTE

You sit much lower in the Arona than in rivals such as the Citroën C3 Aircross so don't get the signature commanding view of an SUV. **CM**

UK VERDICTS

TESTER'S NOTE
The ADAS functions, particularly the lane assist and speed limit warning, are less annoying than others and easily turned off via a few steering wheel button clicks. **JW**

TESTED 14.10.25, BERKSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

TOYOTA HILUX 48V HYBRID

Mild electrification is promised to improve truck's 2.8-litre diesel four

For eight generations and 57 years, the Hilux has stayed true to its roots: dependable, durable, and available with both petrol and diesel power. That legacy continues, but now, for the first time, Toyota has created an electrified version of its venerable pick-up truck.

The Hilux 48V Hybrid is the first Toyota to feature a new mild-hybrid powertrain. This combines a 2.8-litre four-cylinder diesel engine with a 0.21kWh lithium ion battery and an integrated starter-generator, which send their power through a six-speed automatic transmission. It comes exclusively with top-level Invincible X specification.

Toyota says the 48V system offers several benefits, including smoother and quieter performance, regenerative braking capabilities and reduced engine idling speeds. The ISG can supply an additional 16bhp and 47lb ft of torque from a standing start.

The 48V Hybrid also introduces a Multi-Terrain Select system that automatically adjusts drive force, suspension and brake pressure to improve traction and stability in challenging conditions. Its six modes – Sand, Mud, Rock, Dirt, Deep Snow and Auto – should prove useful for rural businesses facing the winter months ahead.

It quickly becomes clear just how mild this hybrid technology is when out on the road. At 201bhp and 368lb ft, the total power and torque outputs are the same as from the conventional 2.8-litre diesel, and its 10.7sec 0-62mph sprint time is identical too. And the promised gains in throttle response are subtle at best.

Performance very much resembling that of the conventional diesel means there's plenty of low-end torque to handle the Hilux's 2250kg kerb weight easily. But the engine sounds awfully clattery and agricultural under heavier acceleration and the automatic transmission feels similarly old-school. As in other automatic Hiluxes we've tested, its gearchanges feel slurred and rubbery on harder acceleration and it isn't entirely keen to shift up when you most need it to.

While things start to settle down at a cruise, the Ford Ranger and Volkswagen Amarok siblings are more refined, with their smoother 10-speed automatic transmission.

On a positive note, Toyota's decision to opt for a mild hybrid with a tiny, 7.6kg battery instead of a full-fat plug-in hybrid (as Ford now offers) means the Hilux's handling also feels much the same as before. The steering is direct and accurate and body control is balanced in most scenarios, but push too hard and you will be greeted by significant body roll, which is to be expected by a vehicle of this size.

Its towing and load-carrying capacities also remain identical at 3500kg and 1000kg, and it's the same story for wading depth and other off-road capabilities.

The mild-hybrid system also allows for longer stints of engine-off coasting, which Toyota says cuts noise and improves efficiency by up to 5%. It is slightly quieter when ambling through town, but even so, the official WLTP figure of 27.9mpg is actually down on the conventional diesel's 29.7mpg. Then again, in our real-world testing, it returned 33.7mpg.

Pricing for the 48V Hybrid starts at £49,750 (or £41,526 if the VAT is reclaimed), making it £1505 dearer than the conventional diesel. Its extra tech and Invincible X spec, which includes tougher styling and two-tone leather upholstery, do little to offset the premium. Stick with the regular Invincible and you won't miss out on much.

JACK WARRICK

TECH SPEC

TOYOTA HILUX 2.8 DIESEL 48V HYBRID INVINCIBLE X

A strong workhorse and reasonably solid on the road, but we expected greater gains from electrification

★★★☆☆

Price £41,526 (excluding VAT)
Engine 4 cyls in line, 2755cc, turbocharged, diesel, plus 48V ISG
Power 201bhp at 3000-3400rpm
Torque 368lb ft at 1600-2800rpm
Gearbox 6-spd automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 2250kg
0-62mph 10.7sec
Top speed 109mph
Economy 30.1mpg
CO_2, tax band 242g/km, 37%
Rivals Ford Ranger 2.0 EcoBlue, Isuzu D-Max

No-nonsense dark plastics are familiar but touchscreen is new

Handling is respectable but take liberties and you'll pay the price

TESTED 21.10.25, WILTSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

VAUXHALL FRONTERA ELECTRIC

EV version of new compact SUV is in fact cheaper than the hybrid model

Ultimate trim doesn't lift perceived quality enough to justify £3850 premium

You can feel the weight of the battery if you push hard

Seven in 10 buyers of the new Vauxhall Frontera have opted for the EV rather than the ICE car. Car makers would ordinarily expect the reverse split but, thanks in large part to the UK government's new Electric Car Grant, it has been flipped on its head here.

Indeed, with the £1500 discount applied, the new Frontera Electric is almost a grand cheaper than the hybrid version, starting at £22,495. That makes it one of the cheapest family-sized EVs on the market too.

The model line-up is simple: there's one motor, making 111bhp, and two battery options, measuring 44kWh and 54kWh in capacity. Officially, they deliver ranges of 189 miles and 253 miles. Our run in the small-battery model on a brisk autumn's morning suggests it should be good for around 150 miles in the real world. Both can be charged at up to 100kW, giving a 10-80% refill time of 26 minutes.

Bumbling around town, that power output feels perfectly adequate. The car accelerates to around 45mph linearly but feels languid thereafter and overtakes require a big gap. It all feels rather relaxed and it doesn't enjoy being pushed all that hard. Demand full power from a standstill and the motor takes a moment to wake up and deliver momentum, akin to getting a manual car rolling in second gear rather than first.

The Frontera Electric's calm character is complemented by its ride. It shimmies over craggy surfaces, but to nowhere near the same extent as the hybrid. It's also better at taking the sting out of bigger impacts, such as potholes. It's a great deal smoother and more consistent than its sibling, feeling like a more polished product.

Its body is well controlled, with vertical movements mostly kept at bay and only a little bit of side-to-side lean through winding country lanes. That should come as welcome news to those with children who are particularly prone to travel sickness.

The steering is accurate and its gearing finds a happy medium between low-speed manoeuvrability and assuredness at motorway pace. It is strangely glutinous, though, and overly keen to return to centre, as if you're fighting a rubber band.

Inside, it's all rather dull. There's a lot of black and grey plastic, all with slightly different hues and textures, and the air-con vents feel a little slapdash in their placement. It is at least well built. Everything feels up to the punishment it will receive in family duties.

Vauxhall deserves praise for its commitment to physical controls. Entry-level Design models get old-school dials while the mid-rung GS and Ultimate trims bring a panel of buttons that looks more upmarket but which I found less intuitive to operate while on the move. All also get a row of switches by your right knee for quickly disabling the ADAS functions – helpful, considering the speed warning buzzer sounds like it has been nicked from a game of Operation.

There's a good amount of room in the back, too. The Frontera is roughly the same size as the Astra estate so swallows up adults and their luggage with ease.

In all, the Frontera Electric stands out as a value proposition. Keep it as cheap as possible – the GS and Ultimate trims aren't worth the upgrade – and it's a solid option for family life.

CHARLIE MARTIN

TECH SPEC

VAUXHALL FRONTERA ELECTRIC 44KWH ULTIMATE

Cheap but not very cheerful family transport. Easily beats the hybrid – if you can deal with the short range

★★★★☆

Price £26,345 (after Electric Car Grant)
Engine Permanent magnet synchronous motor
Power 111bhp
Torque 92lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
Kerb weight 1514kg
0-62mph 12.8sec
Top speed 88mph
Battery 44kWh (total)
Range, economy 189 miles, 3.4mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 3%
Rivals BYD Atto 3, MG S5 EV, Renault 4

TESTER'S NOTE

You can't get a third row of seats in the EV, unlike in the hybrid, because its battery is mounted under the boot floor. **CM**

AUTOCAR ROAD TEST 5783

BYD SEALION 7

Chinese giant aims to add comfort and quality to its technical showcase

MODEL TESTED
BYD SEALION 7 COMFORT
Price £47,000
Power 309bhp
Torque 280lb ft
0-60mph 6.5sec
30-70mph 5.2sec
Top speed 133mph (claimed)
70-0mph 46.6m (12deg C, dry)
Range 272/223/330 miles (average/touring/everyday)
Economy 3.3/2.7/4.0mpkWh (average/touring/everyday)
Weighted average charging rate 73kW

BYD is the latest Chinese car brand to have decided that the most effective route to making money in Europe is via a mid-sized, £50,000, all-electric crossover. And so, here to try to force its way in alongside the Tesla Model Y, Hyundai Ioniq 5, Polestar 2 and more comes the Sealion 7.

This is BYD's first car in Europe to adopt new powertrain and platform technology, taking on-road performance and rapid-charging capabilities to new heights. It's supposed to be the first member of a family of Sealion SUV models, although BYD hasn't said whether there will be larger ones than this, or if the 7 is as big as they will get. As we will come to explain, the Sealion 7 certainly isn't small by its own particular class's standards.

Like many of its rivals, this car offers single- and dual-motor derivatives, the latter especially taking power, torque and performance well into the realms of the excessive. It uses BYD's proprietary battery technology and, unlike most of its rivals, is powered exclusively by lithium-iron-phosphate cells, for which BYD claims plenty of notional and technical advantages over more class-typical nickel-manganese-cobalt ones.

We elected to test an entry-level, single-motor Comfort-spec model.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★½☆

PROS More design charisma than some Chinese-made rivals; LFP battery should deliver good longevity and still perform well in colder temperatures
CONS Seems short on battery capacity and rapid-charging power

The Sealion 7 is the taller, more practical cousin of the BYD Seal saloon. The car's overall length, width and wheelbase are all within an inch or so of the saloon's equivalents and two out of three versions of it are powered by the same 82.5kWh Blade drive battery.

The car is only 1620mm tall, so it's slightly lower than both a Tesla Model Y and a Volkswagen ID 4. The Design AWD model has ground clearance of 163mm, so it's clearly not something intended for adventures off the beaten track.

That Blade battery is packaged in what BYD calls a cell-to-body pack that forms a stressed structural part of the car's all-steel unitary chassis (most underfloor batteries are, by contrast, isolated from the structure around them). Its cells work better at extremes of temperature than NMC equivalents, says BYD; they can tolerate a greater number of charge/discharge cycles before significantly degrading; and, containing no cobalt, they can be manufactured without the ethical concerns associated with cobalt mining.

Seal: BYD has Model 3 and Y rivals

The Sealion 7 is built on the same e-Platform 3.0 underpinnings as almost all of BYD's other models so far, though it's the first one to come to Europe that benefits from the platform's 'evolution' refinements announced last year. And those refinements allow the range-topping Excellence AWD version to adopt an 800V electrical architecture, which allows it faster rapid-charging speeds for its 91.3kWh battery.

All versions of the car use a new primary rear-mounted drive motor that can spin at up to 23,000rpm. It produces similar outright power to, but slightly more torque than, the equivalent in a Seal, but the biggest difference made is to top speed, which is extended to 133mph even in the entry-level Sealion (up from 112mph in the Seal).

There are three Sealion 7 derivatives: single-motor Comfort with 309bhp and an 82.5kWh battery; dual-motor Design AWD with an additional asynchronous front motor, 523bhp and the same battery pack; and Excellence AWD with the same motors as Design-spec cars but the bigger battery and 800V architecture (DC charging is up to 230kW, compared with a 150kW limit for the lesser models).

Suspension is class-typical: double wishbones at the front axle, multiple links at the rear, steel coils all round and every model fitted with passive frequency-selective dampers.

BYD's LFP battery tech doesn't seem to save much weight. The entry-level car's claimed 2225kg rises to 2435kg for the Excellence AWD. Horiba MIRA's weighbridge wasn't available for our test but – in the Comfort-spec model's case, at least – it is about what we would expect for a steel car at the larger end of the mid-sized electric SUV class.

INTERIOR

★★★★☆

PROS Plenty of material heft and tactile quality; spacious up front and in the boot
CONS Second-row seats aren't as comfortable as they might be; touchscreen is a dominant presence

BYD is building a reputation for having interiors with impressive tactile quality. The firm's more experimental early efforts (remember the guitar string-inspired door bins of the Atto 3 that you could actually twang?) have given way to a more conventional approach, although for the Sealion 7 it has certainly produced a cabin with plenty of space, plenty of quality feel and some noticeably expensive highlights.

Pop-out exterior door handles typically have poor tactile and haptic appeal – but the Sealion 7's are different. There's some creditable solidity and heft here good enough to show off the brand's logo.

The 19in wheels are a sensible size for ride comfort. They don't fill the Sealion 7's roomy arches at all well, but BYD masks the impact of that with the plastic wheel-arch trim.

The driver sits quite upright, bent-legged and 'over the controls', in a position that tells you right away that BYD wants to make access easy and comfort a priority – and doesn't much mind if the end result doesn't feel sporty.

The front seats are large and comfortable, though they have integrated-style headrests that you can't move, and aren't quite as widely adjustable as some in the class. Comfort and Design versions come with synthetic leather upholstery that is pretty convincing and pleasant to the touch, and used widely around the doors and on the dashboard as well as on the seats. If you go for an Excellence model, you get real hide.

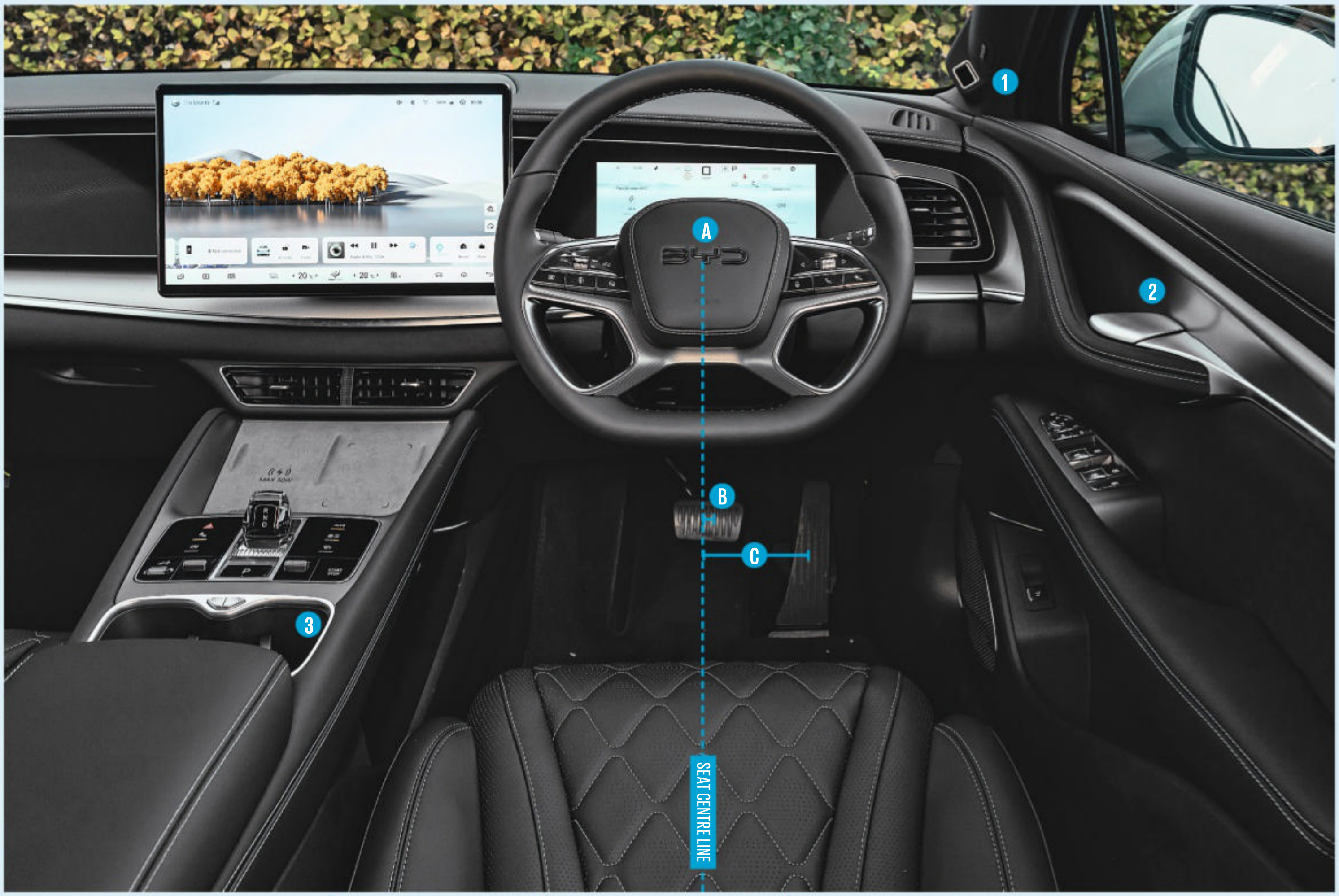
Unlike on some rivals we have tested recently, there's a decent count of physical secondary controls. The centre console includes a swish-looking cut-glass drive selector; knurled-effect chrome switches for drive mode, regen selection and audio volume; and some heating and ventilation controls, although most are accessed through the touchscreen. There are some useful controls on the steering wheel spokes, too, ▸

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EDLESTON

① Driver monitoring sensors are in this pod on the A-pillar, which we were quite tempted to tape over given how irksome the system is and how tricky to disable.

② Can't stand electronic switch-style door releases? The Sealion retains these chunky, chromed release pulls, which have a nicely substantial feel.

③ Cupholders each have their own height-adjustable bottom. Just be careful not to wedge a takeaway cup in them as you push it down, and then later on pull the lid off by mistake.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 15mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 170mm right. Pedal spacing is good, the footwell roomy and the steering column adjustment range fine.

◂ and chunky, no-nonsense interior door release pulls that feel like the antidote to so many annoyingly fashionable, electronic microswitch-style ones. Some of the car's interior features – the multicoloured ambient lighting in particular – don't manage to make it look and feel upmarket, but many do, feeling solid and working well.

The second-row seats certainly look airy and open thanks to the standard-fit glass roof, though the arcing roofline and the way the battery affects leg room erode the amount of passenger space they deliver. There's enough for average-height adults to feel well provided for, but some rivals do better.

MULTIMEDIA

★★★⯪☆

PROS Usability is improving; lots of built-in app functionality
CONS Rotating function isn't quite fully realised; gives you lots of menus and lists to scroll through

It's a sign of how much investment manufacturers are pouring into their in-car digital technology that a 15.6in touchscreen console – that rotates from portrait to landscape, as you prefer – doesn't feel like such a notable feature any more.

BYD has clearly been working on the presentation and usability of the system. It has bigger nav bar icons than previous efforts; gives better access, in and out of smartphone mirroring mode; and manages to group most ADAS controls on a customisable, quick-access swipe-down menu. Annoyingly, though, it continues to bury the driver monitoring system controls elsewhere. That is probably the system you're most likely to want to turn off, since it's annoyingly quick to nag. We would still prefer physical HVAC controls, and shorter lists of functions through which to scroll to find a particular toggle.

We would also prefer a bit more flexibility in the layout of the system – you can only have it in landscape mode while you're using Apple CarPlay, for example. It would also be good if the screen didn't rotate of its own accord when the car corners hard. It can be a badly timed distraction, though it only happened for us during limit handling testing on track.

PERFORMANCE

★★★⯪☆

PROS Assured performance level, most of the time; Standard regen level is nicely judged; brake pedal response is progressive
CONS Slows down a lot as the battery runs down

The single-motor Sealion 7 falls roughly in the middle of its class for outright power and acceleration. There are quicker options for similar outlay, but plenty of slower ones too. And then there's the dual-motor model, if you're willing to spend 10% more.

The Comfort model can therefore probably afford the sort of ample and assured, if slightly unremarkable, performance level it has. Our test car hit 60mph from rest in 6.5sec on a dry test day, without seeming to rush off the line, and while maintaining plenty of composure and comfort. It took 5.2sec to go from 30-70mph and a decently assertive 4.9sec from 50-80mph. While a Tesla Model Y Rear-Wheel Drive is about a second quicker on both of these 'roll-on' benchmarks – more revealing about real-world pace than standing starts – a single-motor Kia EV6 is more than a second slower.

So the Sealion 7's drive motor does indeed lend it strongish motorway pace when you need it. There's less control over regenerative braking than some rivals offer – just Standard and High settings, without a one-pedal mode or a full coasting one (though Standard keeps trailing-throttle regen fairly low). The brake pedal is soft but feels decently progressive, and lets you feel where the limits of motor regen are, and where the friction brakes are coming into play.

The car doesn't make any imitation combustion noises – not for the benefit of its occupants, at any rate – although the 'pedestrian warning' noise it broadcasts to the outside world at low speeds is a slightly haunting mix of tinkling wind chimes that is barely audible from the driver's seat but nonetheless makes you wonder why pedestrians are looking at you like that.

BYD's LFP drive battery did, however, suffer from more 'charge drain' degradation to its performance level at a low state of charge than we found when we tested the Dolphin Surf earlier in the year: 0-60mph acceleration dropped from 6.5sec to 11.5sec below 10% charge, which is much more than the few tenths of a second we typically see.

This could simply be deliberate powertrain tuning – the Sealion 7's way of telling you to stop and power up – or it could be because the car keeps effectively no battery capacity in reserve. BYD didn't confirm either way when asked to comment, but the reality of the situation certainly makes you feel more vulnerable than you might be when charge is low.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★☆☆

PROS Decent, well-isolated town ride; always stable and secure
CONS Restive, fidgeting out-of-town ride; feels its size when you're parking

There are no surprises, and few particularly noteworthy accomplishments, to report here. The Sealion 7 has the medium-soft ride and fairly sedate, inert handling you would expect of a bigger family car, and of one of the bigger and heavier EVs in its class, possessed of a comfort-first agenda. It's a pity, however, that the ride isn't better resolved out of town, in order to allow for smoother cruising comfort.

The car feels fairly gently sprung and laid back at low speeds, and its long wheelbase, wheel-at-each-corner stance and pretty low centre of gravity all prevent it from pitching, lolling or rolling around over bigger rises, through hollows and around corners taken at greater speed. As such, it's a benign-handling car, though it fails to register as much more than adequate as any kind of enticing driving experience.

It feels comfortable and well isolated around town, but the car's body control starts to get more animated over sleeping policemen, as it begins to joggle its weight laterally rather than remaining level and settled.

That restive excitability in the ride builds into a bigger factor at A- and B-road speeds, at which the car's frequency-selective dampers seldom seem to find just the right amount of response to keep it from fidgeting around its rear axle. The problem is only serious enough to take the edge off comfort levels, though, and to continually communicate the car's mass, and seldom to allow it to feel dependably connected with the road underneath it – rather than to meaningfully disturb its stability at speed.

The electronic stability control system can be deactivated at very low speeds, but switches itself back on as you pass about 20mph. It isn't the most intrusive system but works well enough to keep the car's chassis reined in.

ASSISTED DRIVING

★★★☆☆

PROS Decent access to turn off most systems
CONS Driver monitoring isn't one of those that's easy to turn off – and it's annoying; low-speed crash avoidance system is too keen to intervene

BYD's active driver assistance systems remain a bit of a mixed bag. When we tested the Atto 3 in 2023, the car's lane keeping seemed unintrusive to the point that you wondered if it actually did anything at all, whereas its adaptive cruise control was overly cautious and a little unresponsive.

The Sealion 7's systems seem at least a little more advanced. Both lane keeping and speeding reminder buzzers can be turned off fairly quickly, but neither is all that irksome by prevailing norms.

The pedestrian detection and low-speed crash avoidance systems are a bit over-sensitive, the latter given to over-reacting by jamming on the brakes unnecessarily when you're manoeuvring – and little is less welcome when reversing.

The driver monitoring system is also quite annoying, giving you barely two seconds of grace to look at the massive, complex, rotating circus act of an infotainment system before it starts beeping. Switching that off is notably harder than on other systems, and done via a second separate process. Would it hurt to put a control for it on the same page as the other ADAS functions? It would certainly make the car's de facto pre-flight checklist shorter and less bothersome.

BUYING & OWNING

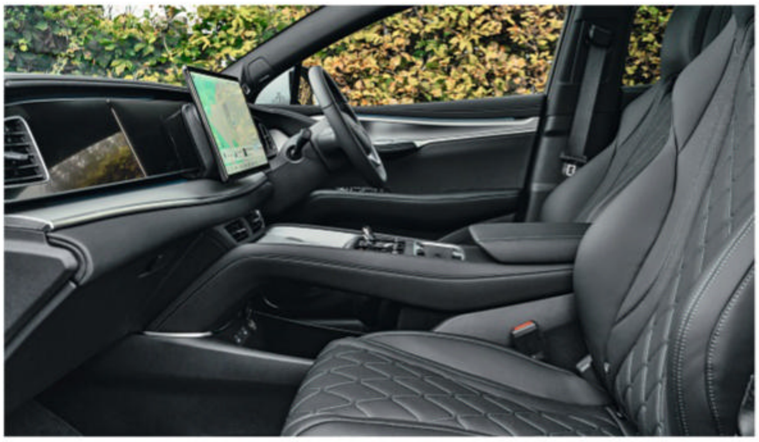
★★☆☆☆

PROS It's quite a lot of family EV for the money
CONS Not very efficient; poor motorway range; poor DC rapid-charging performance

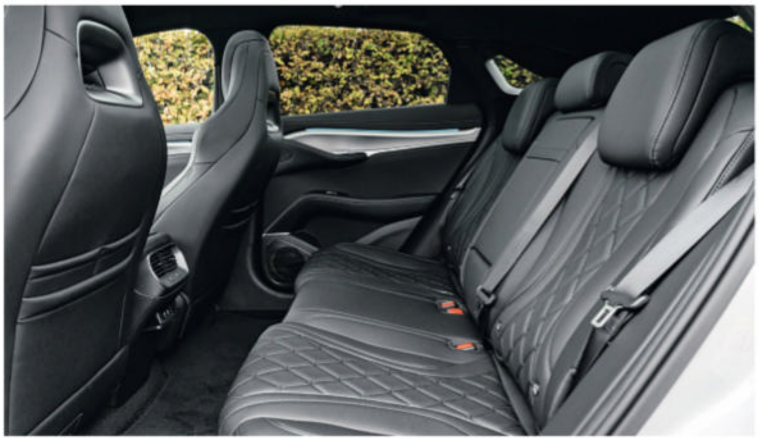
A usable battery capacity of 82.5kWh isn't a great deal for an EV of this size and price, in a class where some are closing in on 100kWh, and the Sealion 7 would need to be particularly efficient to fashion competitive range figures from it – which it fails to do.

Our test car recorded touring efficiency of 2.7mpkWh, which most cars of its ilk could trump. That made for a long-distance touring range of only 223 miles (Tesla Model Y Long Range RWD: 252 miles, MG IM6 Long Range: 290 miles, Kia EV6 RWD: 244 miles).

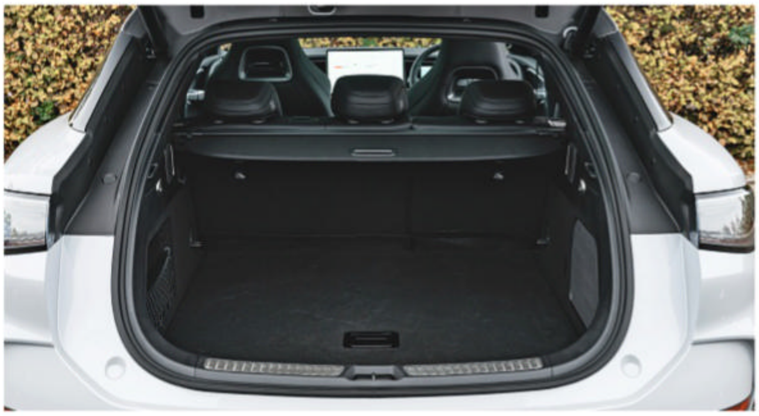
An 'everyday' test schedule return of 4.0mpkWh would suggest that the car's urban efficiency is more competitive. But DC rapid-charging performance is also quite poor, our test car managing a weighted average test result of only 73kW. ▸



FRONT Leg room 1100mm, head room 980mm. Driving position is perched. Seats lack some adjustment tricks but are large and comfortable.



REAR Leg room 820mm, head room 940mm. Leg room is generous, head room less so. High floor means your thighs swing above the seat cushions.



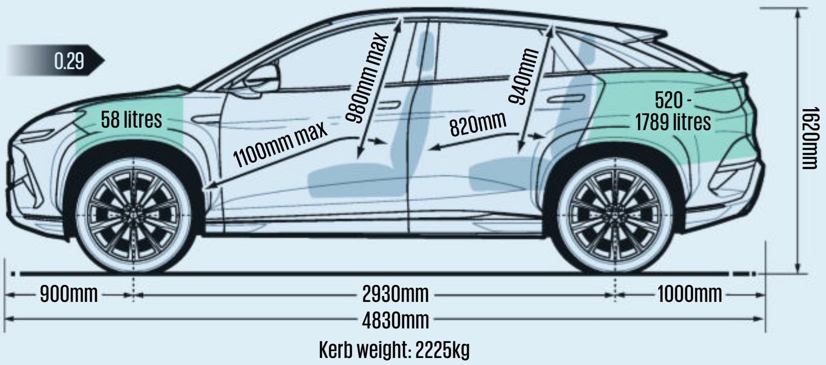
BOOT Length 1000-1950mm, width 1000-1100mm, height 420-710-850mm. Under height-adjustable floor is a storage box, and there's a frunk up front.

"It's a pity that the ride isn't better resolved out of town"

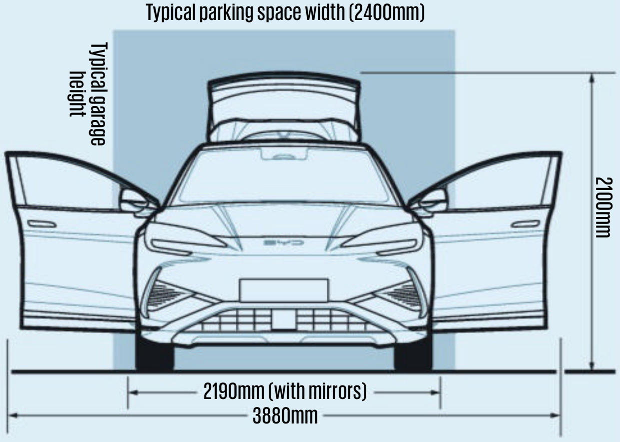
TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS

Length 4830mm **Width** 2190mm/1925mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1620mm **Door span** 3880mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2100mm


0.29
58 litres
1100mm max
980mm max
820mm
940mm
520 - 1789 litres
1620mm
900mm
2930mm
1000mm
4830mm
Kerb weight: 2225kg

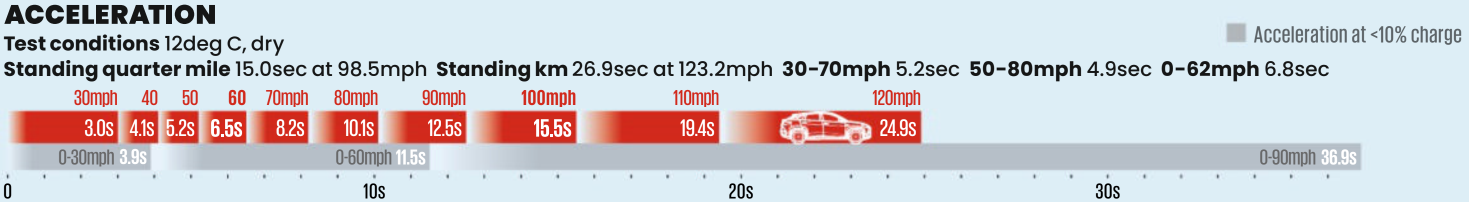
PARKING


Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
2100mm
2190mm (with mirrors)
3880mm

ACCELERATION

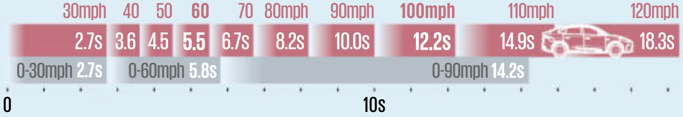
Test conditions 12deg C, dry

Standing quarter mile 15.0sec at 98.5mph **Standing km** 26.9sec at 123.2mph **30-70mph** 5.2sec **50-80mph** 4.9sec **0-62mph** 6.8sec



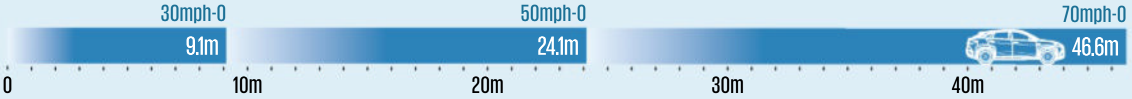
MG IM6 Long Range (2025, 13deg C, damp)

Standing quarter mile 13.9sec at 106.7mph **Standing km** 24.9sec at 133.9mph **30-70mph** 4.0sec **50-80mph** 3.7sec

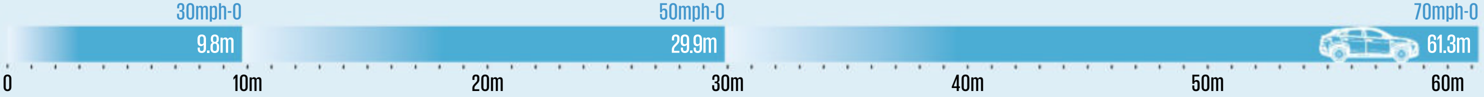


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.61sec

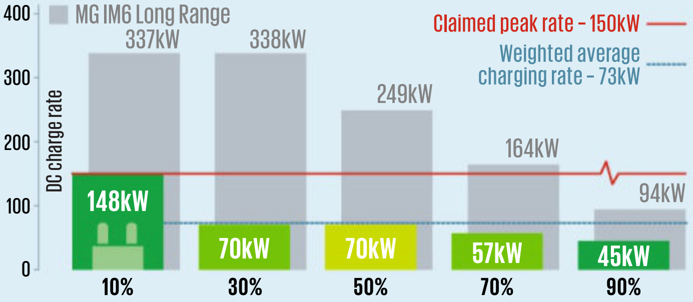


Wet 60-0mph 3.14sec



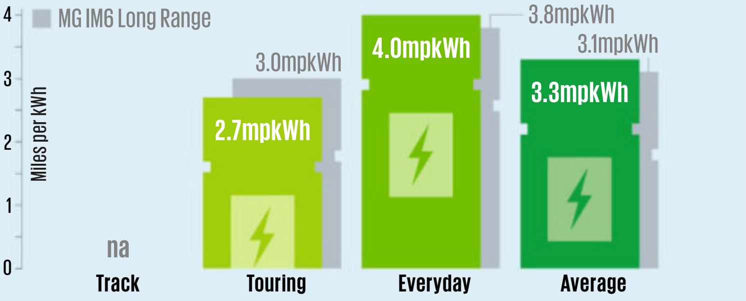
RAPID-CHARGING PERFORMANCE

Charging port location Offside rear wing **Charger used** Alpitronic Hypercharger HYC 300, 300kW **AC charging** 11kW

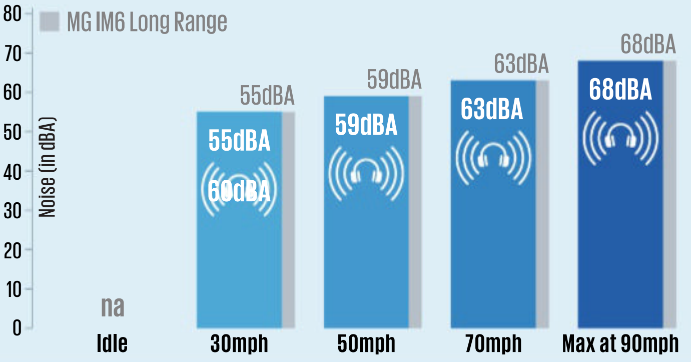


RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 300 miles, 3.1mpkWh (combined) **Test range** 272/223/330 miles (average/touring/everyday)

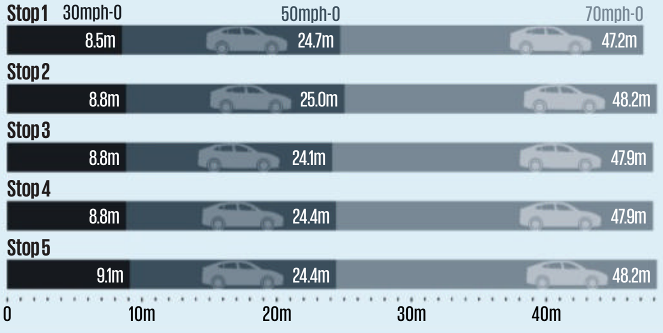


CABIN NOISE



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: 1.0m



THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

PETER LIDDIARD

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

BYD SEALION 7 COMFORT

On-the-road price £47,000
Price as tested £48,100
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £25,055
Contract hire £379 pcm (£2274 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles)
Typical PCP £634 pcm (£4700 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles)
Insurance group 46

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard LED headlights with high beam assist, LED tail-lights with dynamic indicators, panoramic glass roof, electric tailgate, 19in alloy wheels, vegan leather seats, dual-zone climate control, 15.6in rotatable infotainment touchscreen, wireless smartphone charging pad
Optional Indigo Grey metallic paint £1100
Also available Tahiti Blue leather (Excellence AWD only) £0

MOTOR & BATTERY

Installation Rear, transverse, RWD
Type Permanent magnet synchronous motor
Power 309bhp
Torque 280lb ft
Maximum regen capacity 170kW
Battery type LFP
Capacity 82.5kWh (total and usable)
Voltage 550V
Power to weight 139bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 126lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 1-spd reduction gear
Reduction ratio 10.8:1
mph per 1000rpm 7.7
Motor rpm at 70/80mph 9067/10,362

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel unitary chassis
Weight/as tested 2225kg/na
Weight distribution (f/r) na
Drag coefficient 0.29
Wheels 7.5Jx19in (f), 8.0Jx19in (r)
Tyres 235/50 R19 VXL 103V (f), 255/45 R19 VXL 104V (r), Continental EcoContact 6
Spare None (mobility foam)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front Double wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Rear Multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Steering EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.5 turns lock to lock; 11.7m turning circle

BRAKES

Front 368mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers
Rear 317mm ventilated discs, floating calipers

EMISSIONS & TAX

CO₂ 0g/km
BIK at 20/40% pcm £24/£48

VERDICT

Not quite the swish and sophisticated EV it's billed as

★★★☆☆

A young car maker growing as quickly as BYD is likely to be guilty of the odd lapse and inconsistency as it finds a path forward.

It could have done without perpetrating so many conspicuous lapses with what has become one of its flagship models, however. The Sealion 7 ought to show off this company, famed for its expertise in battery and electronics technology, at its very best. But in fact – in entry-level, single-motor form, at least – it's a pretty lacklustre technical effort, and disappointing for its efficiency and range, and its mediocre ride and handling.

The interior is nearer the mark for material quality and space. The car is strong value, too, and its LFP battery may well reward owners in the longer term.

Broadly, though, BYD could and should try harder to make a statement with its bigger cars in future.

TESTERS' NOTES

ILLYA VERPRAET
I'm not sure what kind of effect BYD was trying to achieve with the Sealion 7's ambient cabin lighting, which seems to glow brighter and change colour at random. You can't help concluding that it's there just because.

MATT SAUNDERS
At 6ft 3in tall, I had to recline the seatbacks to have enough head room in the back and also noticed the effect the high floor was having on the position of my legs. I don't remember having these issues years ago in the Jaguar I-Pace – and that car was 6in shorter than this one.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Keep on refining the usability of the infotainment system, especially the ADAS.
- Get some specialist consultation on ride and damper tuning.
- Find a way to improve the touring range by 20-30%.

RANKING RIVALS

	1	2	3	4	5	6
					BYD SEALION 7 COMFORT	
	POLESTAR 2 LONG RANGE SINGLE MOTOR Tops class for driver and design appeal. Now has the range and efficiency too.	**SKODA ENYAQ EDITION 85** The smart choice for the family EV buyer who wants both functionality and value.	**MG IM6 100 LONG RANGE** Great power, range and rapid-charging speed. A bit bland and anonymous in other respects.	**TESLA MODEL Y LONG RANGE RWD** More refined than it was and still super-practical. Due to be getting more efficient soon too.		**KIA EV6 84KWH GT-LINE** Great looking and fleet of foot, though off the pace objectively in many respects.
	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★⯪☆	★★★⯪☆		★★★☆☆
Price	£49,160	£44,310	£47,995	£48,890		£48,585
Power, torque	295bhp, 361lb ft	282bhp, 402lb ft	403bhp, 369lb ft	295bhp, 302lb ft		225bhp, 258lb ft
0-62mph, top speed	5.9sec, 127mph	6.7sec, 111mph	5.4sec, 146mph	5.6sec, 125mph		7.7sec, 115mph
Range, economy	379 miles, 3.9mpkWh	359 miles, 4.1mpkWh	388 miles, 3.4mpkWh	387 miles, 4.4mpkWh		361 miles, 3.9mpkWh

AUTOCAR ROAD TEST 5784

PEUGEOT 208

Here's a blast from the past: a small manual petrol that's a relative snip

The demise of the small, affordable supermini hasn't been as severe as we had feared – at least, it hasn't yet – and the burgeoning clique of quirky, pint-sized EVs is also encouraging. But even so, when it comes to trusty petrol hatchbacks at a knockdown price, today the field is thinner than it once was, as well as being more expensive. This is problematic not just for young drivers who have recently attained their licence and crave nothing more than freedom, but also for any of us who wants cheap, hassle-free motoring, with a decent warranty, in an up-to-date model.

Peugeot's launch of a new 208 Style earlier this year slipped under the radar, but the 1.2-litre petrol version tested here is a welcome arrival, being well equipped and, at the time, costing less than £20,000 (the asking price has since risen a touch to £20,245).

This, note, still doesn't make it a remarkably cheap car in a class that includes even less expensive, similarly sized cars from Renault, Dacia and MG. But the 208 Style has a good level of equipment, a better-than-average output of 99bhp and an enticing manual gearbox.

We test it here not because we think it is in any way a game-changer, but because it may very well be the kind of quietly satisfying supermini that will, in a few short years, sadly be close to extinction.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Recent styling update has kept it fresh; mechanical simplicity; very lightweight next to EV options
CONS Power output still unexciting

With its mechanical simplicity, our test car weighed all of 1122kg on the scales at Horiba MIRA, against a claimed weight of 1090kg. It is fair to say that rarely, these days, do we road test a car that treads so lightly – not that you would expect any other outcome. The 208 is only a mite longer than four metres and carries a little 1199cc three-cylinder engine in its nose, mated to a six-speed manual gearbox that drives through an open differential. There is not a shred of hybridisation in the powertrain to add weight to the recipe, and only 16in wheels. These, note, are not the alloys they initially appear to be. Steels lurk behind.

It means the Peugeot is lighter than the mechanically very similar Mk4 Renault Clio we tested in 2019 (1138kg), and to go much lighter still you need to look beneath the four-metre mark. In 2020, Hyundai's 3670mm-long i10, with its naturally aspirated four-cylinder engine, had an as-tested weight of only 999kg, but that is a smaller, notably less usable car.

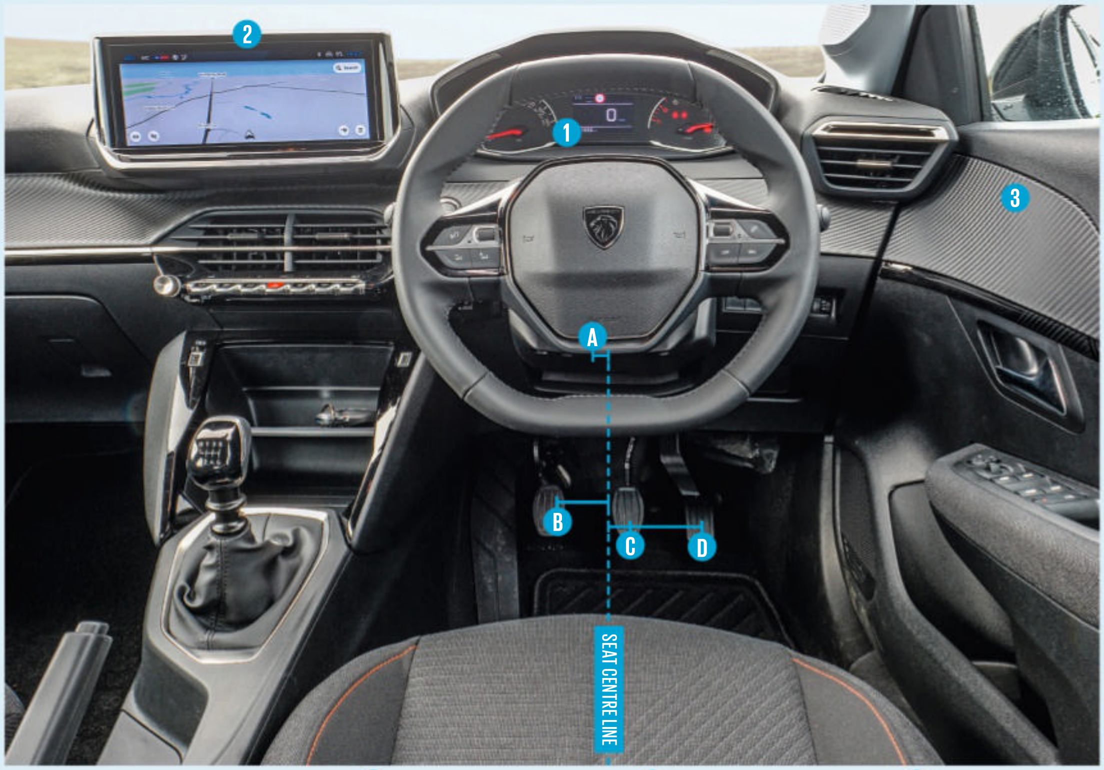
While diesel power has been banished from the range, your options upstream consist of two hybrids – one with 109bhp, the other

MODEL TESTED
PEUGEOT 208
1.2 100PS STYLE
Price £20,245
Power 99bhp at 5500rpm
Torque 151lb ft at 1750rpm
0-60mph 10.4sec
30-70mph 10.4sec
Top speed 117mph (claimed)
Average economy 50.3mpg
Touring economy 51.3mpg
CO_2 emissions 109-127g/km
70-0mph 50.0m (17deg C, dry)

① Style-grade 208 does without the digital instrument panel, and we rather like the presence of big red needles. There's still a digital element – a 3.5in screen.

② Central touchscreen is 10in and runs Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, though Style spec also gets Connected 3D Navigation with TomTom live updates as standard.

③ Range of materials, including a faux-carbon finish, is broad but it can't stop this 208 from feeling very much built to a cost, which isn't true of higher trim levels.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 10mm left Ⓑ Clutch offset 70mm left Ⓒ Brake offset 50mm right Ⓓ Accelerator offset 160mm right. Driving position is generally inoffensive barring tight footrest.

with a healthy 143bhp. Both are equipped with automatic gearboxes and cost considerably more than the basic, three-pedal Style tested here. At the top of the range, in both price and performance, is the purely electric e-208, whose front-driven powertrain puts out up to 154bhp in the top trim, but comes with a 365kg weight penalty.

INTERIOR

★★★☆☆

PROS Mature ambience; comfy over distance for a car of this type
CONS Rear leg room; pedal-box ergonomics; materials quality

The plushest version of the 208 – GT trim –might not be as visually interesting inside as its arch-foe, the Renault Clio, but it has character and a general sense of quality that Peugeot has slowly built up over the past decade or so.

The entry-level Style car is conspicuously less opulent and soft to the touch, though it stops short of feeling bargain-basement, as can be the case with some rivals, notably from Dacia. There's a new, conspicuously thin 'Rimini' cloth for the seats with orange stitching, and rather than leatherette on the door card armrests you get only a slightly rough cloth. Hard plastics also adorn the dashboard a little too conspicuously, though the small steering wheel is nicely trimmed, and piano black – so often an undesirable, overused finish in premium saloons – actually serves to lift the ambience here a touch.

Peugeot's quirky ergonomics are still in full swing here, with the instrument binnacle designed to be viewed over the top of the steering rim, rather than through it. It remains a suboptimal approach, whereby you're required to have the rim in your lap to get a proper view of the dials. Those dials are analogue, by the way. The digital i-Cockpit is reserved for higher trims, though this is no bad thing. It's rather nice to see two thick, red needles – one for road speed, one for engine speed – on either side of the binnacle, when so many cars now opt for fully digital instruments. There is also that very rare thing: a physical handbrake.

In terms of pure ergonomics, the 208 remains a reasonably comfortable car, despite the fact that the steering wheel is slightly offset relative to the decently bolstered seats. Up front there is good head and leg room, and the driving position has a maturity that, even today, is far from a given in this class. The only snag, both in a literal and figurative sense, is your left shoe often catches the clutch pedal when you're placing it on the footrest. This never becomes any less irksome, and for some will be a reason to spend more on an automatic 208. We would sympathise.

Meanwhile, the rear of the cabin is more functional than comfortable. Our measured leg room of 590mm trails that of the Renault Clio (620mm) and the Dacia Sandero (650mm), and the door aperture is also fairly narrow. For an owner intending to frequently carry more than one passenger, there are certainly better options in the class, though the 208 remains competitive enough among cars with a similar mechanical layout.

And what, then, of infotainment? The native system is lower in resolution than some rivals and not perfectly intuitive, but even this base-grade Style runs Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smoothly. There's also plenty of proper switchgear, which Peugeot has advisedly ▸

208
PEUGEOT

■ Style trim brings a black front grille, which is presumably cheaper to make but also looks smarter, to our eyes. Allure and GT grades have silver elements in the grille, for a 3D effect.

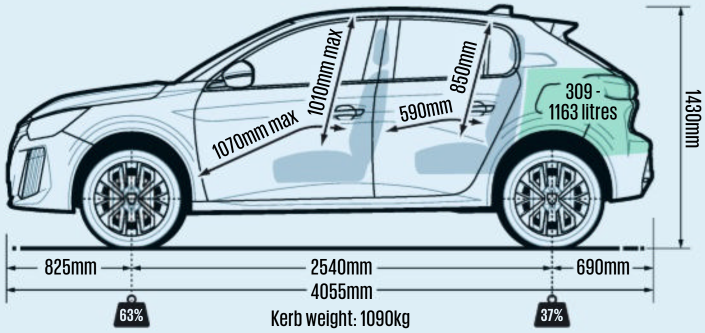
■ These 16in wheels are the smaller of the two sizes Peugeot fits to the 208 (the other being 17in). On Style models they are steelies – a bit of a blast from the past.

PHOTOGRAPHY SIM MAINEY

TEST RESULTS

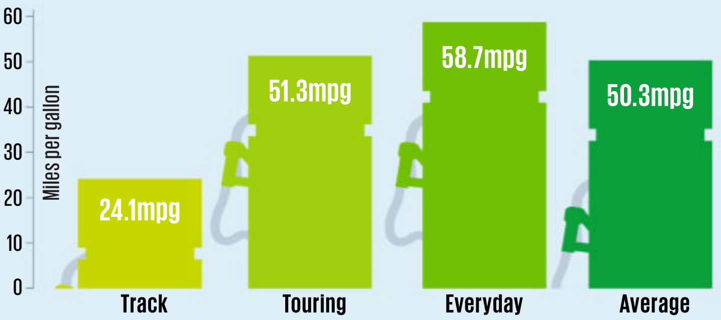
DIMENSIONS

Length 4055mm **Width** 1960mm/1745mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1430mm **Door span** 3560mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2020mm



RUNNING EFFICIENCY

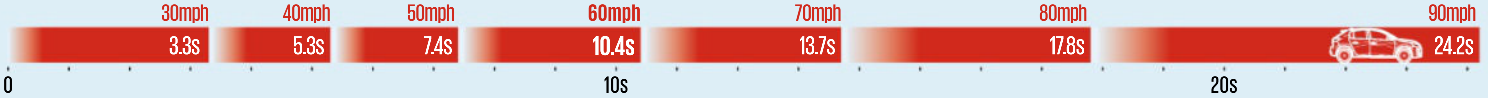
WLTP 50.0-58.2mpg (combined) **Test range** 487/497/568 miles (average/touring/everyday)



ACCELERATION

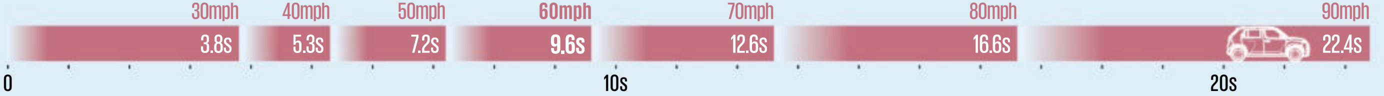
Test conditions 17deg C, dry

Standing quarter mile 17.8sec at 80.0mph **Standing km** 32.4sec at 100.5mph **30-70mph** 10.4sec **30-70mph in fourth** 11.8sec **0-62mph** 10.8sec



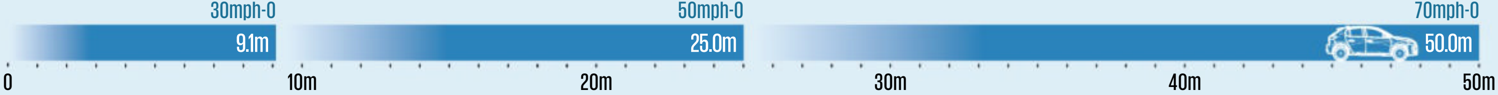
Hyundai Inster 49kWh Long Range 02 (2025, 19deg C, dry)

Standing quarter mile 17.6sec at 81.5mph **Standing km** 32.4sec at 93.5mph **30-70mph** 8.8sec **50-80mph** 9.5sec

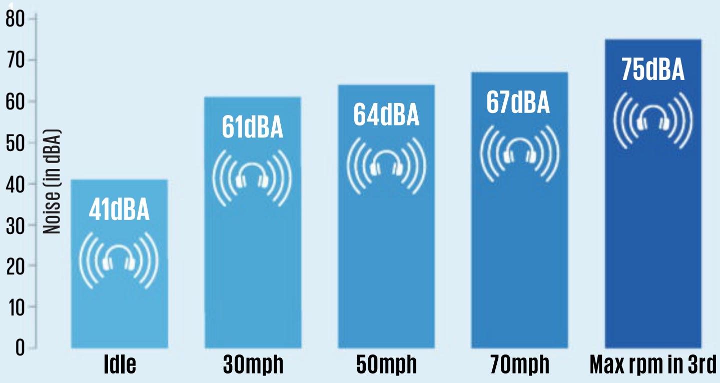


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.65sec



CABIN NOISE



MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

PEUGEOT 208 1.2 100PS STYLE

On-the-road price £20,245
Price as tested £20,245
Value after 3yrs/36k miles na
Insurance group 22E

ENGINE

Installation Front, transverse, FWD **Type** 3 cyls in line, 1199cc, turbocharged, petrol **Power** 99bhp at 5500rpm **Torque** 151lb ft at 1750rpm **Redline** 6450rpm **Specific output** 83bhp per litre **Power to weight** 91bhp per tonne **Torque to weight** 139lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 6-spd manual **rpm in top gear at 70/80mph** 3035/3468

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel unitary chassis **Weight/as tested** 1090kg/1122kg **Wheels** 6.5Jx16in **Tyres** 195/55 R16, Michelin E Primacy **Fuel tank** 44 litres (under rear seats, filler on offside rear wing)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar **Rear** Torsion beam, coil springs, anti-roll bar **Steering** EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.7 turns lock to lock; 11.2m turning circle

> "There is a simplicity to the hustling that makes it likeable"

PETER LIDDIARD

THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

◂ left alone, despite the 2026-model-year update.

PERFORMANCE

★★★☆☆

PROS Useful torque band; manual adds interest; not entirely slow

CONS Limited outright braking performance; gearshift is dull

With some rare exceptions (the old Suzuki Swift Sport being a fine example), budget superminis don't prioritise driver engagement and neither in fairness should they. The most that can be expected is that they are at least reasonably pleasant to interact with, so how does this three-pedal 208 fare in that regard?

In the main, fine. Its small turbocharged engine invites you to gear up and make the most of a healthy peak torque figure of 151lb ft arriving at just 1750rpm. That really is your best approach, because while this Puretech motor will spin out to nearly 6500rpm, there's little satisfaction to be had in taking it to those heights – the note is dull, its manner is strained and the propulsive benefits are increasingly marginal. Stroke the 208 along in a more relaxed gear, carefully conserving momentum, and you will find it to be tractable and the shift itself adequately accurate (though the way your left shoe will often, en route to the footrest, snag the clutch is grating).

At just over 10 seconds to 60mph, outright performance is where it needs to be when measured against the standards of comparable combustion-engined cars, though it's no match for the latest electric superminis, which admittedly cost a few thousand pounds more but are notably more sprightly. The Renault 5 is fully three seconds quicker between 30-70mph than the petrol Peugeot, while the heavier Hyundai Inster is a second or so quicker to 60mph. Those cars' crisper response to roll-on acceleration also makes them that much more satisfying and intuitive to drive in a variety of environments. One must also consider refinement. Under power, relative to these new-era EVs, the 208 can't compete, though it stops short of feeling uncouth.

And ultimately, even with an engine more functional than spirited, and a gearbox with little sense of any real connection, the task of operating this basic Peugeot comes with an enjoyable simplicity. Braking was poor, mind: the car took 50 metres to haul up from 70mph in dry conditions.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Reasonably assured and neutral handling; decent manners

CONS Chassis is fairly lifeless from an enthusiast perspective

On its 16in wheels the 208 has a fairly assured gait and is easy company on motorways, though poorer road surfaces expose the lack of sophistication in the suspension. It's a familiar story for this type of car, but where the 208 is perhaps a little better than average is in its body control, which rarely spills over into sloppiness.

Where it is less impressive than average – certainly by French standards – is the handling. Broadly inoffensive and safe, the basic 208 is almost wilfully non-adjustable at road speeds and only shows a flicker of character under serious provocation on the track. It doesn't help that the steering has a woolly take-up, with a call-and-response routine with the suspension that robs it of much sense of alacrity or verve. A basic Fiesta, before Ford ruthlessly retired the model, was a lot more enjoyable than this on a half-interesting country road.

As for refinement, this is an area in which low-spec ICE cars often struggle against their electric counterparts, because engine isolation is pretty far down the list of priorities. With its reasonably small frontal area, the 208 actually does well in terms of wind noise, and the engine isn't overly present even under duress. But it isn't as quiet as an Inster, and any comparable pseudo-crossover is likely to have better road manners.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Everyday economy can be very good indeed; well priced

CONS Still not the bargain of the class; higher trims cost a lot more

A starting price of just over £20,000 isn't the game-changer you would think. Even an Audi A1, albeit in basic trim with a five-speed manual, costs around £24k, and the Renault Clio and Skoda Fabia make life hard for the 208, which is well equipped (automatic lights, air-con and heated wing mirrors) at this price but not notably so. To get parking sensors and automatic wipers, as well as electric-folding door mirrors, you need to opt for the pricier Allure.

As for economy, the car did very well by our 'everyday' measure, returning 58.7mpg. That is better than the smaller, lighter Kia Picanto achieved, and gives the 208 a real-world range of more than 500 miles from a 44-litre tank. Its touring economy of 51.3mpg is respectable for a petrol supermini too.

VERDICT

It's stylish and efficient but could be more memorable to drive – and ergonomic

★★★☆☆

Peugeot's decision to offer a variant that greatly reduces the cost of entry to the range is laudable, especially at a time when comparably sized EVs are still struggling to get close to the £20,000 mark.

It helps that a recent nip and tuck has ensured the 208 remains among the more striking superminis, and the prospect of a small, revvy motor and manual gearbox add further appeal.

In reality, this basic Style derivative has strengths – economy chief among them – but not enough perceived quality or engagement for it to outclass fine rivals that also exist at a bargain price.

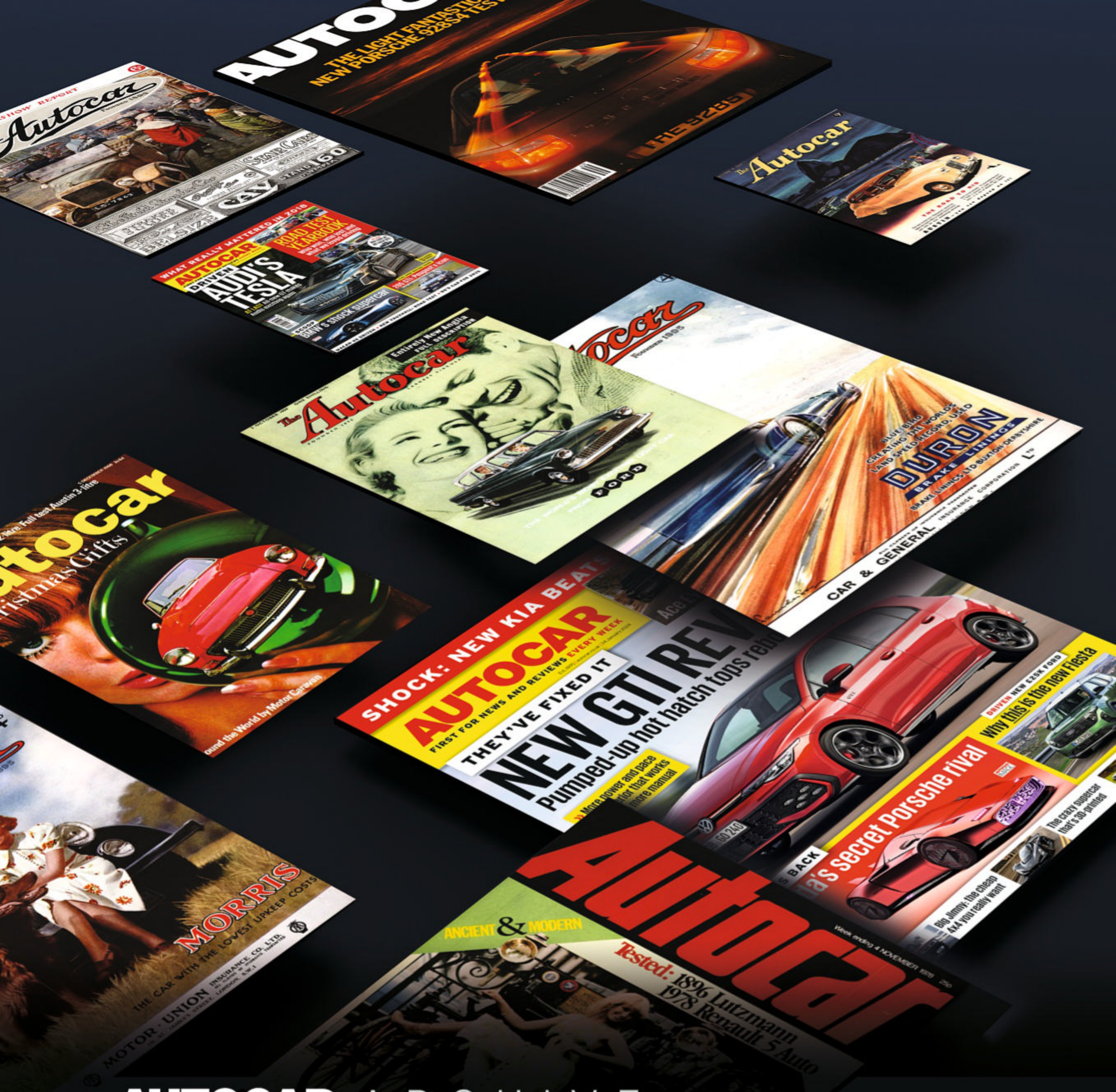
RIVALS

RENAULT CLIO TCe 90
From £18,995
★★★★☆

SEAT IBIZA 1.0 TSI SE
From £21,485
★★★★☆

SKODA FABIA 1.0 SE
From £21,055
★★★★☆

4 **PEUGEOT 208 100PS STYLE**


AUTOCAR
THE LIGHT FANTASTIC
NEW PORSCHE 928S4 TESTED
Autocar
The Autocar
AUTOCAR
AUDI'S TESLA
ROAD TEST YEARBOOK
The Autocar
DURON
BRAKE LININGS
CAR & GENERAL
Autocar
Christmas Gifts
SHOCK: NEW KIA BEATS
AUTOCAR
FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK
THEY'VE FIXED IT
NEW GTI REV
Pumped-up hot hatch tops rebo
Why this is the new Fiesta
secret Porsche rival
MORRIS
THE CAR WITH THE LOWEST UPKEEP COSTS
Autocar
ANCIENT & MODERN
Tested: 1896 Lutzmann
1978 Renault 5 Auto

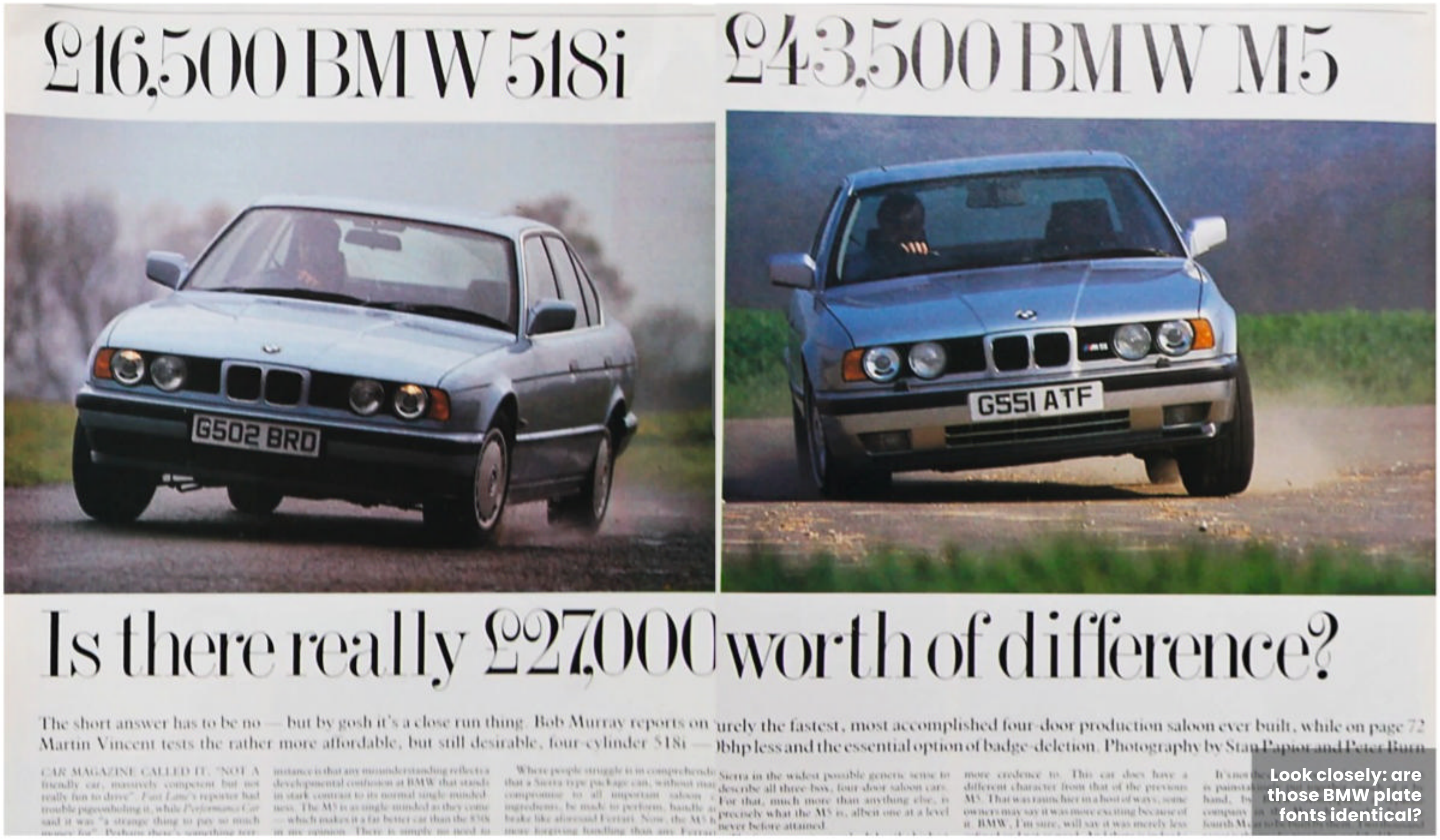
AUTOCAR ARCHIVE

Get unlimited access to 130 years of searchable archive content

Subscribe today
themagazineshop.com/aca24paa/aca

ILLYA VERPRAET

Testing, testing



£16,500 BMW 518i

£43,500 BMW M5

Is there really £27,000 worth of difference?

The short answer has to be no — but by gosh it's a close run thing. Bob Murray reports on
Martin Vincent tests the rather more affordable, but still desirable, four-cylinder 518i —
urely the fastest, most accomplished four-door production saloon ever built, while on page 72
)bhp less and the essential option of badge-deletion. Photography by Stan Papior and Peter Burn

Look closely: are those BMW plate fonts identical?

When you buy an old car, it's easy to get pulled into various internet rabbit holes – buying guides, common problems, popular upgrades, that sort of thing. But I've set foot in a particularly deep and magnetic one – one to rival QAnon and Pizzagate: numberplates.

Modern UK plates are sensible and a bit boring. There's only one legal font and the first two pairs of numbers and letters tell you roughly where and when the car was first registered. Back before 2001, though, fonts were a free-for-all. There was a vaguely standard one, but I've seen everything short of hieroglyphs.

Verpraet's wall art beats any Picasso print

AZL-079
DU PT 944
OBJ·815
DU 127 M
O-ABA-702
GV05 KWE

> “84 pages on Belgian plates for free! God love these people”

I've recently bought a BMW from 1990, so I had the idle thought of sourcing a set of plates with the same font as the one the BMW press office used in period. I know you're not supposed to put plates on your car in anything other than the current style, but since you're allowed to drive around with old plates, surely no one is going to take issue? Spirit of the law and all that.

Cue a trip to the Autocar archive to look at old pictures of BMWs, and as it turns out even the BMW press office in the late '80s and early '90s couldn't make up its mind which style it wanted to use. I was soon comparing the pointiness of the letter 'M' in various lurid cornering shots of unsuspecting 3 Series and the length of the horizontal line in the letter 'G' in grainy photographs of 5 Series.

Where did they get all of these different fonts? What was their logic? Was there nobody to regulate this chaos? Does this confirm the existence of aliens?

Think things made more sense in other countries? Think again. In Belgium, numberplates stay with people rather than cars, so over the years my family has amassed a random collection of carless numberplates.

Some of them I remember being attached to a car, others I didn't recognise, so I decided to do some digging. There are many dark and awful things on the internet but also some pearls of arcane wisdom. It transpires that some legend named Alain Dupont wrote an 84-page document charting the history of Belgian numberplates, covering everything from the (lack of) logic behind the letters and numbers, to when exactly they switched from enamel to stamped aluminium and how the various provinces were basically fighting over who could allocate which number. Eighty-four pages and free to access on the internet! God love these people.

Thanks to Dupont's work, I've been able to ascertain that 984H6 must have been issued to my grandfather in the second half of 1954, as a replacement for his 50288 plate from the 1940s. Does this information help me in life? Not in the slightest.

A recent European road trip was punctuated by Google searches to figure out why Denmark has partially yellow plates and which German city gets plates that start with MYK. Why does Switzerland get those cute small front plates? When did France stop using yellow plates on the rear? Why do Irish plates use such an ugly font?

Most importantly: why do I care? These are more or less randomly allocated letters and numbers used for various boring administrative purposes. And yet for some reason I'm annoyed that the one on my old BMW uses the wrong font for the period and that the current tint of red on Belgian plates isn't as nice as the red from 20 years ago.

Send help – and the name of the font that the BMW press office used for its plates in 1990.

Think smarter. Think smaller

Small used cars make wise buys. **JOHN EVANS** picks 50 midget gems

Small cars are amazing. With much less space to work with, they must accomplish many of the things that in far larger cars we take for granted. As if that weren't enough, they must be cheaper than bigger cars too.

For a while, it looked as if the future of the small car was doomed, but in recent months we've seen a new generation of small, Chinese electric cars arrive. Then, and perhaps in response, the EU proposed that European makers get behind a new small car category called E-car, inspired by Japan's titchy kei cars.

So things may be looking up for new, small cars. Meanwhile, on the used market, small cars are still plentiful and available in as many varieties as Heinz once boasted. Well, almost as many. We've identified 11 categories of small car, from hatchback and SUV to convertible and MPV and, just for fun, modern classic. For guidance, where models are still in production, our 'price range' estimates stop at 2024-reg, and where a car has a performance derivative such as a hot hatch, it's not included in the price range estimates for lowlier versions.

Hatchbacks

Roomy, practical, frugal, fun to drive, good value… hatchbacks must be all things to all buyers. They're workhorses but often taken for granted, so ensure the one you're looking at has been fed and watered.

SEAT IBIZA 2017-

PRICE RANGE £3500-£20,000

Not such good value as the related Fabia (see right) but sharper looking and better to drive. The cabin is smart and a wide choice of trims brings rising levels of kit. As small turbo engines go, its 1.0 TSI 95 unit is impressively reliable but beware coked-up, low-mileage cars.

WE FOUND Seat Ibiza 1.0 95 FR 5dr, 2020/69, 37,000 miles, £10,800

FORD FIESTA 2017-2024

PRICE RANGE £2500-£18,000

Great ride and handling, good equipment levels and a reasonably spacious cabin make the Fiesta a five-star car but with a major caveat: the popular Ecoboost engine has a timing belt that runs in oil, making it prone to failure. Assuming there's no risk of the oil pump being contaminated and requiring replacement, a new belt alone including fitting is around £1200.

WE FOUND Ford Fiesta 1.0 Ecoboost 100PS Zetec 5dr, 2019/68, 40,000 miles, £8400

TOYOTA YARIS 2011-2020

PRICE RANGE £2000-£15,000

Here's another hatchback that's still delivering the goods at mature years. It's dull but it's also reliable, which, at this price point, matters more. Pricier hybrid versions promise better economy but their downside is a breathless CVT gearbox.

WE FOUND Toyota Yaris 1.3 Icon 5dr, 2014/14, 32,500 miles, £5999

RENAULT CLIO 2019-

PRICE RANGE £5000-£20,000

There are plenty of used Clios around at great prices but the current generation is the pick: fun to drive and practical. Choose the turbocharged TCe engine, which has a timing chain, although the dry belt of the slower SCe engine should be reliable as well.

WE FOUND Renault Clio 1.0 TCe 90 Evolution 5dr, 2023/72, 30,000 miles, £11,750

PEUGEOT 208 2019-

PRICE RANGE £4000-£21,000

The 1.2 engine is gutsy but, sorry to go on, has a wet belt (the later hybrid 1.2 MHEV has a chain), making regular oil changes essential. Otherwise, the car itself is stylish and comfortable. Allure trim has alloys, dual-zone climate control and power windows all round.

WE FOUND Peugeot 208 1.2 Puretech 100 Allure 5dr, 2021/71, 27,000 miles, £11,800

BEST BUY
KR17 ZKF

SUZUKI SWIFT 2017-2024

PRICE RANGE £4000-£20,000
Roomy, enjoyable to drive, efficient (there's even a mild-hybrid variant), reliable and supported by helpful dealers, the Swift makes a great used car buy. Interior plastics, ride comfort and refinement could be better, but to buyers on a budget the Swift's ease of ownership matters more. On that point, Suzuki recently extended its three-year warranty to 10 years. Cars must be no older than 10 years, have done fewer than 100,000 miles, be checked by a Suzuki dealer to begin the cover and serviced by them to maintain it. Cover is transferable.
WE FOUND Suzuki 1.0 Boosterjet SZ-T 5dr, 2019/68, 34,000 miles, £8790

KIA RIO 2017-2023

PRICE RANGE £3000-£12,000
Kia's seven-year warranty is a big draw but the car must have a watertight service history and wear and tear are not covered. Otherwise, buy away: the Rio is well equipped and roomy, it looks sharp and the 118bhp 1.0-litre turbo motor injects much-needed sparkle.
WE FOUND Kia Rio 1.0T-GDi 2, 2022/22, 39,000 miles, £11,000

SKODA FABIA 2015-2021

PRICE RANGE £2000-£14,000
First things first, the 1.0-litre TSI engine has a dry, rather than a wet, belt. Other good things about the Fabia include decent cabin space and pleasant driving manners. The trim is hard and scratchy but tough. Beware DSG auto issues and MirrorLink infotainment bugs.
WE FOUND Skoda Fabia 1.0 TSI 95 SE 5dr, 2020/69, 33,000 miles, £9950

VOLKSWAGEN POLO 2009-2017

PRICE RANGE £1500-£13,000
There's a later model, but if your budget won't stretch, a Polo of this vintage is a good used buy because it feels just as premium, while Match Edition brings ample trimmings. Depending on the engine code, the 1.2 unit has either a dry, as distinct from a wet, timing belt or a chain.
WE FOUND Volkswagen Polo 1.2 Match Edition 5dr, 2014/14, 50,000 miles, £6995

DACIA SANDERO 2021-

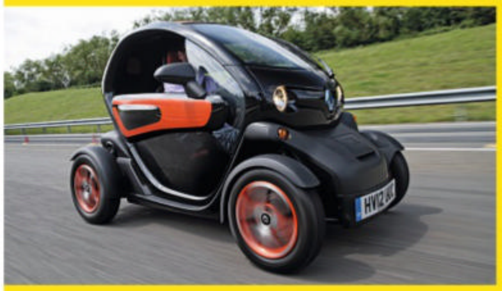
PRICE RANGE £6500-£14,000
You could always make a case for choosing the Sandero on price, but facelifted, third-generation versions now also look half-decent. Handling and refinement remain a touch below par but the car is comfortable, well appointed and still a snip.
WE FOUND Dacia Sandero 1.0 TCe Expression, 2023/23, 15,000 miles, £10,400

Micros

For a tiny, fun runabout, one of these (a car and two quadricycles) should be just the ticket.

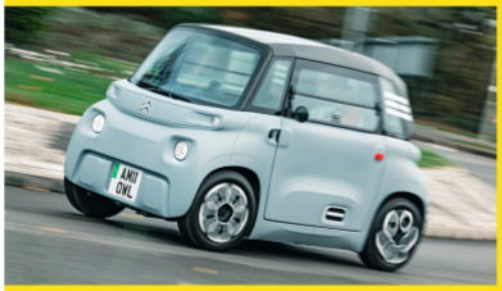
SMART FORTWO 2014-2024

PRICE RANGE £2500-£11,000
Faster, wider, better suspended and with a funkier interior, this generation is a welcome improvement on its predecessor. It still has the Tridion safety cell and, of these micros, is the easiest to live with, but try a Kia Picanto (better value, better all round) before you commit.
WE FOUND Smart Fortwo 1.0 Passion Twinamic, 2018/68, 16,500 miles, £8500



RENAULT TWIZY 2012-2021

PRICE RANGE £3500-£8500
It may have four wheels but the all-electric Twizy's similarity to a car ends there. Think of it more as a motorcycle but without a bike's ability to filter through traffic. If the drive battery is leased, you can settle the contract, typically for around £240, and own it. Replacement batteries are still available from Renault. Check the health of the auxiliary drive battery, that the on-board charger works, the front seat slides to admit a passenger in the rear and the floor drain holes are clear.
WE FOUND Renault Twizy Colour (battery owned), 2012/12, 5000 miles, £3995



CITROEN AMI 2022-

PRICE RANGE £4000-£7500
Like the Twizy, the Ami is an electric quadricycle but, unlike the Renault, it can be driven by a 16-year-old with a Category AM moped licence. It offers better protection from the elements and is roomier but, otherwise, you feel almost as vulnerable. The drive battery comes with it and is not leased. Check the fit and finish: some examples look and feel thrown together and are already rusting.
WE FOUND Citroën Ami, 2022/72, 1000 miles, £4200

4x4s

Two of these cars could give a Defender a run for its money. The third just looks as if it'd like to.

SUZUKI JIMNY 1998-2018

PRICE RANGE £4000-£19,000

Prices for the later, fourth-generation Jimny launched in 2018 are still so off the scale that, for all its antiquity, its predecessor is the better buy. After all, we're just talking degrees of awfulness on the road, while off it this gen is equally impressive. Beware paying too much for a late example, when privately advertised, fourth-gen, 2018-reg cars with around 65,000 miles start at £17,000.

WE FOUND Suzuki Jimny 1.3 VVT SZ4, 2015/65, 34,000 miles, £13,495

FIAT PANDA CROSS 4x4 2014-2020

PRICE RANGE £5000-£13,000

The original Panda 4x4 is a modern classic and doubtless this mildly updated version will also be, one day. A light weight, lofty ride height, short overhangs and long-travel suspension give it decent off-road chops while the Twinair motor has just enough muscle at low revs to haul it out of trouble.

WE FOUND Fiat Panda 0.9 Twinair Cross 4x4, 2015/15, 40,000 miles, £8950

SUZUKI IGNIS ALLGRIP 2016-2024

PRICE RANGE £6000-£18,000

Not a 4x4 in the Jimny mould (its wading depth and approach and departure angles preclude all but gentle mud and puddle frolics) but more than capable of embracing the UK's knottiest roads. Comfortably? Not exactly; the ride is soft but fidgety. Otherwise, it looks good, has a mild-hybrid motor to aid the fuel economy and, being a Suzuki, it'll be reliable.

WE FOUND Suzuki Ignis 1.2 Dualjet MHEV SZ5 Allgrip, 2017/17, 43,000 miles, £8995

MPVs

Whether moving furniture or families, these small MPVs simply rise to the task at hand. Just check the interior hasn't been reduced to fragments in the process.

VAUXHALL MERIVA 2010-2017

PRICE RANGE £1000-£8000

Roomy, practical, versatile, well equipped and good value, the Meriva ticks all the important boxes. Indeed, it gets another thumbs up for its convenient, rearward-opening doors. The timing chain tensioner can slacken (listen for a diesely rattle at low revs) but otherwise it's a reliable car.

WE FOUND Vauxhall Meriva 1.4T 120 SE, 2016/16, 46,000 miles, £4900

CITROEN C3 PICASSO 2009-2017

PRICE RANGE £1000-£8000

Distinctive looking and impressively roomy, this is a more characterful alternative to the bland but capable Meriva. Diesels dominate, but so long as you avoid a low-miler, the Euro 5 1.6 HDi is a good engine. Beware the robotised manual on the few 1.6 VTi ETG6 petrols out there.

WE FOUND Citroën C3 Picasso 1.6 HDi VTR+, 2014/14, 57,000 miles, £4300

HONDA JAZZ 2020-

PRICE RANGE £9000-£24,500

It just scrapes in here as an MPV, thanks to its tall body, large glasshouse and 'Magic' rear seats, which fold flat and whose bases tip up cinema-style for added load-carrying flexibility. No Jazz ever set the world alight. Instead, versatility, practicality, economy and reliability are what it does best and are what matter in any case.

WE FOUND Honda Jazz 1.5i-MMD SR eCVT 5dr, 2022/72, 11,000 miles, £16,900

FORD B-MAX 2012-2017

PRICE RANGE £1500-£9000

We should steer you away from the Ecoboost engine with its wet belt, but these issues can be overblown so buy away. If you have any doubts, keep some cash back for its replacement. Otherwise, what a great car: sliding rear doors, no central pillar and even fun to drive.

WE FOUND Ford B-Max 1.0T Ecoboost 125 Zetec, 2016/65, 42,000 miles, £5900

City cars

These little marvels of the car world prove you can get a quart in a pint pot. Many of them have spent their time in the urban jungle, so look out for battle scars and a worn clutch.

HYUNDAI i10 2020-

PRICE RANGE £8000-£18,500
A safe, spacious, refined and economical runabout that's easy to recommend. Provided that it has been properly serviced, it will have the balance of Hyundai's five-year warranty too. There's a 1.0-litre turbo but the 1.2-litre is better value.
WE FOUND Hyundai i10 1.2 SE Connect, 2021/71, 27,000 miles, £10,485

VOLKSWAGEN UP 2012-2023

PRICE RANGE £3000-£13,000
It was this or a Skoda Citigo or Seat Mii sibling. The Citigo tempts with its low prices and the Mii with its extra style but the Up has wider availability, a stronger image and slightly more upmarket interior, although still expect bare metal surfaces. Check the clutch isn't slipping.
WE FOUND Volkswagen Up 1.0 TSI 90 High Up, 2016/66, 39,000 miles, £5995

BEST BUY

KIA PICANTO 2017-

PRICE RANGE £5000-£18,500
Sibling to the i10 and just as practical but with a greater emphasis on driving pleasure at the expense of outright refinement. Like for like, it's a little cheaper than an i10 plus, for peace of mind, it has a longer warranty. It's our pick of the two.
WE FOUND Kia Picanto 1.2 3, 2020/20, 29,000 miles, £9350

SUZUKI IGNIS 2016-2025

PRICE RANGE £4000-£18,000
Not surprisingly, the boxy-looking Ignis is among the most spacious cars in its class but, despite its lofty stance, is fun on twisty roads. Well equipped and reliable, it is easy to like, apart from maybe its fidgety ride and a tough but sparse cabin. Go hybrid for the extra power.
WE FOUND Suzuki Ignis 1.2 Dualjet 12V Hybrid SZ-T, 2021/21, 26,000 miles, £10,842

TOYOTA AYGO X 2022-

PRICE RANGE £8000-£18,000
Deficient in some areas, including rear cabin and boot space and steering feel, but strong on looks, performance (relatively speaking), grip, equipment, economy and reliability. No wonder we keep seeing them.
WE FOUND Toyota Aygo X 1.0 VVT-i Pure 5dr, 2023/23, 12,000 miles, £11,600

Electric cars

If any car demonstrates the logic in buying used, it's an EV. Much cheaper than new and with any software issues ironed out, the only real concern should be the capacity of the drive battery. Reckon on 2% degradation per year.

PEUGEOT E-208 2019-

PRICE RANGE £9000-£21,000
The e-208 is closely related to the Corsa Electric (below) but is more comfortable and stylish, so it looks and feels less like fleet fodder. Not surprisingly, it has similar range and performance. Even prices aren't far apart. Niggly electrical and software faults blight some cars but most dealer service departments know the fixes now.
WE FOUND Peugeot e-208 50kWh Allure, 2020/20, 33,000 miles, £10,395

VAUXHALL CORSA ELECTRIC 2020-

PRICE RANGE £7500-£23,000
A used Corsa Electric is around the same price as its 1.2 petrol turbo stablemate. The EV is slightly quicker and, on a favourable day, its real-world range is 160 miles. Fast-charge capability is good too. Beware software issues and sub-par dealers.
WE FOUND Vauxhall Corsa Electric 50kWh Elite Nav, 2020/20, 27,000 miles, £9950

FIAT 500E 2020-

PRICE RANGE £8500-£20,000
Nippy, stylish and with plenty of assistance features, the electric 500 is a good urban runabout but, in 42kWh battery spec, also has the legs to go 200 miles. However, it's noisy, cramped and not especially comfortable, so whether you'd want to… Used ones are good value but check there are no software glitches.
WE FOUND Fiat 500e 42kWh Icon 3dr, 2022/22, 34,000 miles, £10,395

RENAULT ZOE 2013-2024

PRICE RANGE £2250-£13,500
Values never recovered from the battering they received when EVs were in their infancy, making the Zoe a good used buy. Go for a post-2017 model with the longer-range, 41kWh battery (up to 170 miles in the real world) and more powerful R110 motor. Many drive batteries were leased but it's possible to settle the contract, so factor that into the deal. Niggly faults plague some cars.
WE FOUND Renault Zoe R110 ZE40 Dynamique Nav, 2019/19, 11,000 miles, £7999

SKODA CITIGO-E iV 2019-2022

PRICE RANGE £9000-£10,500
Rare but worth the search for its decent range (160 miles), comfy ride, strong initial acceleration, roomy cabin and conventional looks shared with the VW e-Up and Seat Mii Electric. The Citigo is reasonably practical but the interior now looks dated. Test the on-board charger and check your phone pairs easily with the car (it works through an integration app).
WE FOUND Skoda Citigo-e iV 36.8kWh, 2020/20, 20,000 miles, £9500

HONDA E 2020-2023

PRICE RANGE £10,000-£15,500
A future classic? Only its pitiful 135-mile range spoils this adorable electric car, with its camera side mirrors, flush door handles and two large touchscreens inside. It's fun to drive and well built too. Most cars are in Advance trim with a playful 150bhp. The small, 12V battery can fail and some cars suffer rattles from around the steering wheel.
WE FOUND Honda E Advance, 2020/70, 27,000 miles, £12,400

Estates

Practical cars that also drive well. Often hard used so ensure the load area is still in one piece.

MINI CLUBMAN 2015-2024

PRICE RANGE £4500-£32,000
The Clubman is one of the few Mini spin-offs that can trace its origins back to an illustrious forebear – in its case, the Austin Mini Clubman estate. Fortunately, it's a touch larger (there's 1250 litres of load space with the rear seats folded flat) but it has the same double rear doors. It's as fun to drive as the hatch yet roomier and much more practical. Minis are reliable but check the bodywork.
WE FOUND Mini Clubman 1.5 Cooper, 2018/18, 40,000 miles, £11,500

SEAT IBIZA ST ESTATE 2008-2016

PRICE RANGE £1500-£6000
One of the older cars here but still valid, especially with 1164 litres of seats-down load space. ST stands for sports tourer, so in that spirit the roofline slopes towards the back. The rear suspension is uprated to ensure handling and comfort are unaffected by heavy loads. The ST is rare, good value and well built. It shares many parts with other VW Group models.
WE FOUND Seat Ibiza 1.2 TSI FR ST Estate, 2016/16, 52,000 miles, £5995

BEST BUY

SKODA FABIA ESTATE 2015-2021

PRICE RANGE £3500-£14,500
Like the Three Bears, the Skoda Octavia Estate is big, the Superb Estate bigger still but even the Fabia Estate, the baby in the family, can put away the porridge – with the back seats folded flat, all 1395 litres of it. It's very practical but it's also good to drive, comfortable and refined. Shoot for at least SE trim with its alloys, rear parking sensors and air-con. Reliability is good.
WE FOUND Skoda Fabia Estate 1.2 TSI 109 SE, 2017/66, 25,000 miles, £8995

Sports hatches

Even small cars can have big fun, as these prove. In fact, there's often more joy to be had wringing the neck of a small motor. Just make sure the previous owner hasn't broken it.

FORD FIESTA ST 2018-2024

BEST BUY

PRICE RANGE £8000-£22,000
It may be slightly larger than its predecessor, although not necessarily roomier, and have a three-pot motor rather than the four of old, but as far as fun goes, it's business as usual for this seventh-generation Fiesta ST. Fit and finish trails the Polo GTI but Fiesta reliability in general is slightly better.
WE FOUND Ford Fiesta 1.5T Ecoboost ST-3 5dr, 2020/20, 30,000 miles, £15,900

VOLKSWAGEN UP GTI 2017-2023

PRICE RANGE £11,000-£18,000
The Up GTI is the grafter in the sporty hatch segment – one that has to work hard to make up reasonable ground against bigger and more powerful competitors. To a large degree, it succeeds. There's fun to be had here and for relatively little money too.
WE FOUND Volkswagen Up 1.0 TSI GTI 3dr, 2020/20, 27,000 miles, £12,995

MINI COOPER S 2013-2023

PRICE RANGE £4500-£26,000
Kart-like handling is the Cooper S's thing – that and punchy performance and bombproof build quality. The auto 'box requires expensive servicing, so stick with the manual. Sport versions look good but have an unpleasantly firm ride. Classic-spec cars are gentler on the spine.
WE FOUND Mini Cooper S Classic 3dr, 2020/20, 50,000 miles, £11,900

SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT 2018-2024

PRICE RANGE £8500-£18,000
With its naturally aspirated engine, the previous Swift Sport was a purist's delight. The generation we're recommending here is turbocharged (later versions even have mild-hybrid technology) but otherwise many of the older model's qualities – including a low kerb weight (just 975kg), keen handling and a supple ride – remain. Note that its diamond-cut alloys aren't cheap to refurbish.
WE FOUND Suzuki Swift Sport 1.4 Boosterjet 5dr, 2019/69, 30,000 miles, £11,495

VOLKSWAGEN POLO GTI 2018-

PRICE RANGE £12,000-£26,000
As quick and powerful as the Fiesta 1.5 Ecoboost ST of 2018-2024 but available only with the DSG automatic gearbox. Hugely grippy yet not quite as chuckable and communicative as the Ford. On the other hand, it's smoother, more grown-up and better finished. The 2021 facelift freshened it up but save your money and buy earlier. The venerable 'EA888' 2.0-litre engine is tough.
WE FOUND Volkswagen Polo 2.0 TSI GTI DSG 5dr, 2020/20, 30,000 miles, £15,700

Modern classics

As we say farewell to small, combustion-engined cars, these should be on your radar as potential future investments.

FORD FIESTA ST 2013-2017

PRICE RANGE £3500-£12,000

Why wait for modern classic status to be conferred on it and for examples to become scarce? Instead, buy this generation of the Fiesta ST now while you still have the pick of the field and prices are low. The dry-belt engine is a cracker and well served by a chassis, steering and suspension that channel all of its power in common cause: having fun.

WE FOUND Ford Fiesta 1.6T Ecoboost ST-3 5dr, 2017/66, 33,500 miles, £11,995

VAUXHALL TIGRA 2004-2009

PRICE RANGE £650-£2500

Vauxhall's answer to the Peugeot 206 CC is the better car in all respects. Its convertible hard top operates quickly and, when raised, turns the Corsa-based two-seater into a weather-tight coupé, although do check the roof seals. Find a cherished, private-owner car such as we did and it should hold its value. But don't confuse it with the earlier-gen Tigra, which is coupé-only.

WE FOUND Vauxhall Tigra 1.4i 16v Exclusiv, 2009/09, 60,000 miles, £1300

AUDI A2 2000-2005

PRICE RANGE £1750-£3500

The A2 was a forward-looking car 25 years ago and in some respects it still is. People who own them tend to keep them. Add in the fact that it was on sale for less than five years and you'll be lucky to find a genuinely good one. Check for rust caused by poor crash repairs, dip the oil and be sure the gearchange is smooth and, if it's a diesel, the dual-mass flywheel isn't doomed.

WE FOUND Audi A2 1.4 SE, 2003/03, 116,000 miles, £2000

FORD PUMA 1997-2001

PRICE RANGE £500-£30,000

Unlike today's SUV, the Puma of 25 years ago was a small 2+2 coupé. Ford called it a driver's dream and in 1.7 Racing trim – the version that commands the highest prices today – it certainly was. However, even a standard Puma is fun. Sadly, a genuinely good one is as rare as hen's teeth, rust being the killer.

WE FOUND Ford Puma 1.7 Thunder, 2002/02, 68,000 miles, £2150

Convertibles

Check the hood is watertight, there are no rainwater marks inside and fittings are secure.

MINI CONVERTIBLE 2016-2024

PRICE RANGE £5750-£35,000

Aside from having a smaller boot and less rearward visibility than the hatchback version, the Mini Convertible demands few compromises. It's as much fun as the hatch and even more so in the right weather. It trembles a little over bumps but otherwise feels well screwed together. The 1.5-litre three-pot engine pulls strongly but is coarse at low revs and thumps into life on start-up. Check you can live with that.

WE FOUND Mini Cooper Convertible 1.5 Classic automatic, 2020/20, 14,000 miles, £17,450

FIAT 500C 2009-2024

PRICE RANGE £1200-£15,000

It's not a full convertible, but given you can roll the fabric roof completely back, it qualifies here. With its cramped cabin and bouncy ride, the model is easy to criticise but stay with it and you'll find the 500C is fun in corners, the 1.2 petrol engine is eager and refined and, with the roof open, it oozes charm.

WE FOUND Fiat 500C Lounge 1.2, 2016/65, 19,000 miles, £6950

SUVs

Even small cars come in ubiquitous SUV form. We won't hold that against them, though. These five are fine examples of the breed but, being family cars, their interiors may have taken a battering.

DACIA SANDERO STEPWAY 2021-

PRICE RANGE £7500-£17,000

More than just a jacked-up Sandero, the Stepway is slightly longer as well as taller than its hatchback sibling. The result is a spacious cabin, front and rear, and a maximum load volume of 1108 litres. This generation shares its platform with the current Renault Clio and in 2022 acquired Dacia's latest brand logo, which looks pretty cool. Also cool is all that rugged body cladding, although it may trap water. Check that no warning lights are on; some Sanderos have suffered engine management issues.

WE FOUND Dacia Sandero Stepway 1.0 TCe Expression, 2023/23, 39,000 miles, £11,200

FORD PUMA 2019-

PRICE RANGE £8000- £27,000

We recently named the Ford Puma Britain's best used car and with good reason because it delivers on almost every front, including price and availability. Reliability too? Selling in such big numbers can unmask a few rotten apples. Most issues are niggly faults, but rather than being confined to a couple of areas such as software or electronics, there are some owner reports of problems across the board – including mechanical, electrical and bodywork. For this reason, we recommend comparing a few cars before you buy one.

WE FOUND Ford Puma 1.0 Ecoboost mHEV 155 ST-Line X, 2021/21, 30,000 miles, £14,195

RENAULT CAPTUR 2020-

PRICE RANGE £7000-£24,000

The current generation of Captur gets the nod here over its 2013-2019 predecessor (which is priced today at £2500-£13,000) for its sharper looks, plusher interior and wider range of engines. A key point to note is that a major facelift in 2024 brought the car bang up to date. If only Renault had made it a bit roomier in the back...

WE FOUND Renault Captur 1.3 TCe SE Edition, 2022/22, 51,000 miles, £12,400

SEAT ARONA 2018-

PRICE RANGE £6000-£20,500

Good looking, deceptively roomy, practical and well equipped, the Arona gets everything right – well, almost everything. The lower-powered 94bhp 1.0-litre engine feels overwhelming so go for at least the 113bhp unit. SE Technology is the optimum spec but next-rung-up FR trim lifts the otherwise fairly plain interior. Keep an ear out for rattly trim.

WE FOUND Seat Arona 1.0 TSI 113bhp FR, 2019/19, 30,000 miles, £10,500

SKODA KAMIQ 2019-

PRICE RANGE £8500-£24,000

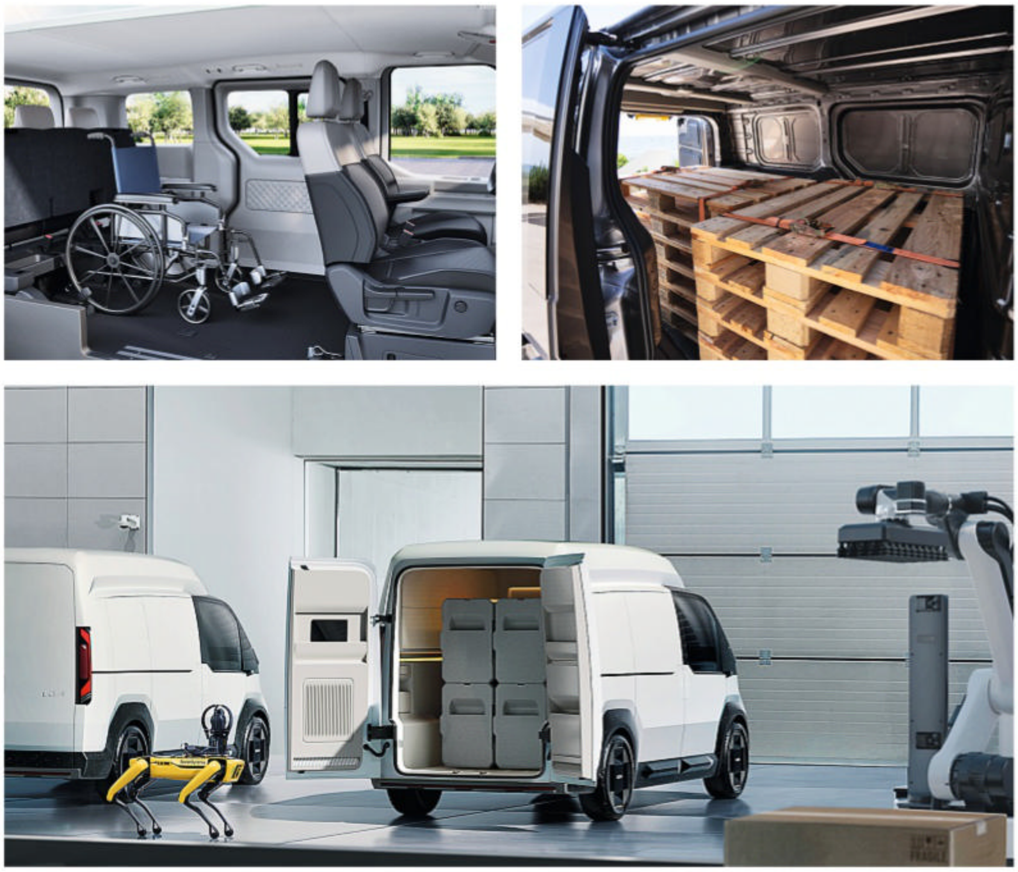
Skoda does practical cars well and the Kamiq is no exception. It's not the prettiest compact SUV or the most exciting to drive, but it is very comfortable. The rear cabin, especially, is very roomy and you'll find plenty of useful storage areas. With the back seats folded, there's 1395 litres of boot space too. Other Skoda models are more reliable, mind, so choose with care.

WE FOUND Skoda Kamiq 1.0 TSI SE, 2021/21, 32,000 miles, £11,395

One step beyond

Kia's innovative Platform Beyond Vehicle range of electric vans is set to shake up the global market for commercial vehicles. **JAMES ATTWOOD** investigates

PV5 has a refined drive; three-part bumpers reduce repair costs



Factory customisation is key to PBV production efficiency; research in the UK focused on business needs

In this transition era for the automotive industry, barely a week passes without a manufacturer wheeling out a bold new electric machine with a flashy presentation that claims it brings tomorrow's technology to today's roads and will transform the fortunes of the firm that made it. But those presentations don't normally include extended sections on load-bed access, Euro-pallet capacity and bumper repairability.

Except they do when your transformative vision of future motoring is a van – although that perhaps undersells the significance of the new Kia PV5. The firm labels it a Platform Beyond Vehicle (PBV), and it's the first in a range of highly customisable bespoke electric models intended to disrupt the commercial vehicle market and help continue Kia's remarkable growth. Think of the impact of the brand's bespoke EV line-up, but for vans.

This isn't strictly Kia's first foray into commercial vehicles: the Bongo cab-over pick-up has been sold in Korea and other markets since 1981 and spawned the Pregio van and MPV. But this is an entirely fresh business model, and one designed for volume: Kia is aiming to reach sales of 250,000 PBVs annually by 2030. "This is the next chapter of the Kia story," says Sangdae Kim, head of the firm's PBV division. "This is how we move forward as a leading EV brand."

Kim – known as SD, which he quips stands for "Smart Device, just like our PBVs" – has been building the new division for around four years. He says Kia identified the commercial vehicle market as one with "room for meaningful innovation" through the development of a line of electric vans, adding: "Our PBVs are designed to adapt to people, not force people to adapt to it."

The electric van market is small but growing fast, particularly because many businesses are being pushed to switch to zero-emission models for their own environmental goals. But most electric vans on the market are either conversions of combustion vans (think the Ford E-Transit or the many Stellantis models), while the Volkswagen ID Buzz uses a lightly modified version of the VW Group's MEB platform.

For its PBVs Kia has developed a specially tailored version of the Hyundai Motor Group's bespoke EV platform, named E-GMP.S (Electric Global Modular Platform for Service), which the firm says gives much more flexibility to create a range of modular and customisable machines. It's a front-driven platform, and the PV5 features a variety of battery sizes – giving a range of up to 258 miles – and 4.4 cubic metres of load capacity.

The 4.7-metre-long PV5 is the first of those, with Kim describing it as "our way into the LCV market". It will be followed by the PV7, which will be around 5.2 metres, based on a concept vehicle, and the PV9. Those two will arrive in 2027 and 2029 respectively. Given how quickly Kia is filling out its EV line-up with a full range of numbered models, you can take a guess at how big the stable could eventually become. A small PV1 Concept has been shown, but smaller vehicles aren't an early priority.

But each of the PBV line-up is far more than just a singular vehicle: the modular design allows for tremendous flexibility. The PV5 will be launched with Cargo and Passenger variants, but the range will eventually allow for seven bodytypes with 16 specifications. So the Cargo will have three- and four-door versions, a larger-capacity High Roof option and crew and chassis cab variants. The Passenger will gain six- and seven-seat versions – it will be launched as a five-seater – along with a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle variant.

Kim says Kia conducted extensive research with potential customers in various fields – from delivery firms to ride-hailing services – to help develop the details of the PV5. For example, the ▶

“Europe and Canada will be key target markets at launch, but these are fully global products”

PV1 CONCEPT
PV5 CONCEPT
PV5 CONCEPT HIGH ROOF

Kia president Ho Sung Song already has a PV5 on order. He says it will be converted into a camper for weekend use.

Kia president Ho Sung Song devised PBV strategy

Bongo has been a Kia staple since the early 1980s

◂ bumpers are made in three parts, making it cheaper to replace a section if it is damaged, while the step height of the van has been kept as low as possible for delivery companies.

The dynamics of the PV5 have also been refined for its use scenario. In Cargo form it’s direct and easy to handle, with great visibility from the high-up driving position. It’s not hugely dynamic, but the car-based roots of the platform can be felt in more refined handling than many vans. Inside, everything is built for purpose. It’s not as nicely appointed as the Passenger version, but the materials are all hard-wearing to cope with extended use and there’s loads of practical storage. That focus on usability and practicality is baked into every element.

The PV5 will be manufactured at Kia’s Autoland Hwaseong plant, located in the sprawling southern suburbs of Seoul. The 3.2 million-square-metre facility is Kia’s largest production site, with around 520,000 vehicles produced there each year, including the Sorento, Niro, EV6 and K8 saloon.

More than £560 million has been invested in constructing a new 100,000-square-metre facility to build the PV5, creating around 1000 jobs so far. When full mass production starts, the plant will have capacity of around 100,000 PV5s per year (along with about 70,000 Tasman pick-ups), with two eight-hour shifts per day producing a vehicle every four minutes or so. A second new production facility is already under construction at Hwaseong to manufacture the PV7 and PV9.

Autocar’s visit comes on a holiday at the factory, but the potential is clear as we wander along the vast production line. The process is highly automated, in part because of the need for the heavy flexibility required to produce such a wide range of variants on a single line. But the unique aspect – and perhaps the real magic – of this plant is located at the end of the production line, where a large number of dedicated bays are waiting to accept newly constructed PV5s for extensive customisation.

This is the key to the business model dreamed up by Kia president Ho Sung Song, and it’s vital to the PBV operation by offering greater cost-effectiveness and being less wasteful. “With commercial vehicles, so many of them have a customisation process, which is normally done by outside partners,” Song tells Autocar.

Many commercial vehicles go straight from a production line to a third-party firm for conversion to meet the requirements of the company that’s buying them. That, says Song, is not good commercially, and it’s not good for the environment because people produce a new vehicle only to immediately throw out the production-line interior. It’s wasteful. “By producing as many variants inside the factory as possible we can make that process easier, and we can produce the vehicles to meet the order from

PV5 is the first in what will be a wide range of customisable PBVs

Camper specialist Westfalia will work in-house with Kia

the start, with minimal waste," says Song.

That means elements such as refrigerated units, bespoke shelving and storage can be added in the factory at source. Kia will still work with partners where appropriate: for example, it is planning light- and full-camper forms, with conversions done in the factory and through camper specialist Westfalia. Even then, Kia will supply vehicles to third-party firms with only the elements needed, so nothing has to be removed.

The other business aspect of the PBV side is software and fleet management: Kia has developed a bespoke operating system, which enables the cloud-based services and fleet management offerings that commercial vehicle customers require. Song says that software is another chance "to do things differently, and it helps how we make it into a business".

Europe, including the UK (see box, below), and Canada will be key target markets at launch, but these are fully global products. Notably, Kia will sell the PV5 in Japan – the first time it has offered a vehicle in the market. That's partly for historical reasons – you don't see many Japanese cars in Korea, either – but Kim says the firm identified a huge opportunity given the growth potential of the electric LCV market there.

And it's that growth potential that underpins this whole undertaking. "It's going to be very challenging," says Song of the prospect of hitting Kia's ambitious PBV goals. "But we have a strong plan, and this is the right decision."

WHY UK IS KEY TO KIA'S PBV PLANS

As Kia's biggest European market, the UK will be crucial to the firm's plans to become a major player in the commercial vehicle (CV) business: it says that by 2030 the aim is to sell 17,000 units here annually, around 7% of its global total.

"It takes us into a new market, and it's a huge chance to grow," says Simon Hetherington, Kia UK's commercial director. "We have a 4% share of the car market, and this is a brand extension." That said, there's a big difference between selling cars and selling commercial vehicles, which has meant a lot of learning. "It's been great for us as a business," adds Hetherington.

Kia has recruited CV experts and worked to build knowledge in-house, including multiple events to meet potential customers. With Britain such a key market, Hetherington says members of the global PBV development team have been on extensive fact-finding visits to meet UK customers and understand their specific needs. "The voice of the UK consumer has really been involved," he says.

That has led to "very specific" design features for the UK. Hetherington cites as an example the three-part bumper and measures to reduce service, maintenance and repair costs: "The UK market is more mature than many in respect of how such things are understood and reported."

Kia has also developed a market strategy tailored to the UK, including a separate commercial vehicle dealer network. There will be around 60 dealers at launch, initially focused on urban areas and all operated by some of Kia's 190 car dealers. Hetherington says that wasn't a requirement but the result of strong interest from its partners.

Hetherington says: "We've been careful not to place PBV dealers anywhere they might compromise the experience for car buyers." He cites the need for service centres to be able to fit CVs in, while having access to sufficient grid capacity for charging.

Hetherington says the versatility of the PV5 means it will target a broad section of the market, and the key is educating customers, particularly firms looking at EVs for the first time. He adds: "If they're ready for electric, we're the right answer."

The PV5 should be competitive on price: in the UK the Cargo will start from £27,645 and is eligible for the £5000 plug-in van grant. Hetherington says there has been plenty of interest and is "excited" that has included larger companies looking for a single solution for electric car and CV fleets, potentially boosting car sales.

That's why Hetherington thinks Kia's entry into the UK CV market is ideally timed: "In the car market lots of new brands are coming in and doing amazing things. Why can't we be that equivalent in the van world?"

Hetherington: excited by the PBV opportunity

Fleet management is also part of the PBV offering

Multiple variants are built on one production line

LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"It looks pretty good and the interior is endlessly charming"

FINAL REPORT **MILEAGE 7107**

MAZDA CX-80

Seven-seat PHEV had plenty to prove while it was here. Did it succeed?

WHY WE RAN IT To see if Mazda has improved on the CX-60 and to find its ranking among big SUVs

Let's start this final report with some unfinished business. A few weeks ago, while describing the troubles I was having running our plug-in hybrid CX-80 without a home charger (no DC rapid-charging capability, glacial public AC chargers), I promised to go into detail about the pleasure of running it in emissions-free near-silence.

Certainly doing so makes me feel less guilty about clogging up urban streets and air with an enormous gas-guzzler, and it also makes for a smoother, more relaxing driving experience – if also one that's notably compromised when compared with a legit EV. A total of 173bhp makes the electric motor sound pretty strong, but it has more than two tonnes of SUV to haul around, so about 40mph is the limit – so long as no steep inclines are involved. And with the battery capacity being a modest 17.8kWh, electric-only range is just 38 miles. That's fine for urban duties, of course, but alternative plug-in hybrid SUVs can easily do a short motorway commute on electricity alone, leaving the CX-80 feeling conspicuously outdated.

My praise here really is limited to: one, the fact that once I've selected EV mode (via a switch on the centre console), the digital power gauge gains a needle representing the point at which the petrol engine will need calling into action; and two, the existence of a button that lets you set a minimum battery charge level for a journey (in increments of 10%, right up to 100%), which the powertrain proved good at obeying.

'Compromised' is also the most appropriate word to describe the characteristics of the CX-80's PHEV powertrain in its standard hybrid mode. The unusually large and naturally aspirated engine, a 2.5-litre four-cylinder petrol unit, has to rev like mad to generate sufficient torque in faster driving. The accompanying growl quickly becomes wearing. Not as wearing, though, as the regular shunting as the powertrain shifts between its two power sources – an unacceptably unrefined sensation for a £50,000 car to be inflicting on its occupants.

This shortcoming is familiar from the disappointing CX-60 PHEV we ran a few years ago – as is the ride quality, despite a host of upgrades Mazda has made to the suspension since then. Although it would cruise quite comfortably

SECOND OPINION

It's a fine line between doing things differently and just plain not as well. Mazda's electrification efforts have too often been in the latter category. The CX-60 and CX-80 PHEVs are unrefined, are thirsty when running on their engines and don't have meaningful EV range. For me, the six-cylinder diesel version is a no-brainer. **MS**

Culmer, at 5ft 8in, had sufficient head room in rearmost row

We'd have gladly traded some of its agility for comfort

Mk1 Twingo really put CX-80's size into perspective

down motorways, my CX-80 could feel dreadful on battered urban road surfaces. Everybody to whom I gave a lift almost immediately remarked on the slamming through potholes and jostling over uneven sections. This is a heavy car on big wheels, yes, but so is the equivalent XC90 T8, and that is leagues comfier. Maybe the CX-80 is more agile than the Volvo, but what does handling agility really matter to the average buyer of a seven-seat SUV?

Mazda UK's spreadsheet botherers won't want to hear this, but the option of a 3.3-litre diesel straight six is the CX-80's saving grace. This smooth and efficient engine also lightens the load on the suspension by some 100kg, surely making the ride less troublesome. Honestly, I reckon I could easily have got better fuel economy out of it as well: my overall return from a tank with an empty battery never exceeded 33mpg, and ad hoc top-ups of a few kWh here and there hardly seemed worth the time and expense in retrospect, even if it did notably boost MPG.

The idea of my car without the electrical gubbins really does appeal, because my criticisms of it are exclusive to the powertrain and suspension: otherwise, the CX-80 is a lovely thing. It looks pretty good for a bus and I found the interior endlessly charming.

The mixture of interesting design and unusual materials, especially when upholstered in the creamy tones we chose, created a calming upmarket ambience. This was furthered by the prevalence of physical switchgear and real digital restraint on the designers' behalf. (An abundance of pixels can be so taxing on the eyes and the brain.) And when I did have cause to use the infotainment, it was much less distracting than usual, because the touchscreen was supplemented by a twisting dial and buttons on the centre console. Even BMW has now abandoned this control scheme, but I reckon it's still among the best solutions yet tried.

The CX-80 was very practical, too – as you would hope from its bay-busting length and width, not to mention its freakish wheelbase. Friends over 6ft tall had loads of head and leg room in the front, while even the third row was big enough for me to sit in without discomfort (at 5ft 8in). And with all five passenger seats folded down, the boot proved vast enough to swallow two full-size bikes with both wheels attached.

Overall, though, running the CX-80 was a frustrating experience. I really wanted to like this car, as a long-standing admirer of Mazda's maverick attitude, and indeed I enjoyed many aspects of it, but the powertrain and suspension simply didn't make the grade.

KRIS CULMER

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
kris.culmer@haymarket.com

TEST DATA

MAZDA CX-80 2.5 E-SKYACTIV PHEV TAKUMI

MILEAGE

At start 3009
At end 7107

PRICES

List price new £53,880
List price now £54,180
Price as tested £56,730

OPTIONS

Convenience and Driver Assistance Pack £1950, Artisan Red metallic paint £900

ECONOMY AND RANGE

Claimed economy 176.6mpg
Claimed electric range 38 miles
Battery 17.8kWh
Test average 39.0mpg
Test best 80.0mpg
Test worst 31.1mpg
Real-world range 493 miles (petrol), na (electric)

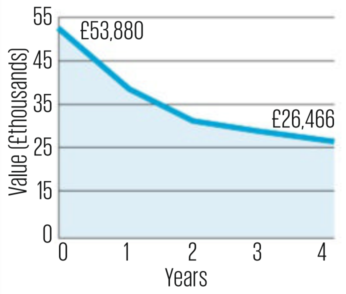
TECH HIGHLIGHTS

0-62mph 6.8sec
Top speed 121mph
Engine 4 cyls in line, 2488cc, petrol, plus electric motor
Max power 323bhp
Max torque 369lb ft
Gearbox 8-spd automatic, 4WD
Boot 566-1971 litres
Wheels 20in, alloy
Tyres 235/50 R20, Toyo Proxes Sport
Kerb weight 2290kg

SERVICE AND RUNNING COSTS

Contract hire rate £513 pcm
CO_2 35g/km
Service costs None
Other costs Screenwash £14
Fuel costs £662.91
Running costs including fuel £676.91
Cost per mile 17 pence
Faults None

DEPRECIATION



PREVIOUS REPORTS

10 Sep, 24 Sep, 8 Oct, 15 Oct, 29 Oct

LOVE IT

INTERIOR
Neither overwrought nor starkly digi-minimalist, it struck the perfect balance. Light trim suited its visually appealing design too.

BUTTONS
None of the HVAC controls, audio volume, screen brightness, ADAS muting or mirror adjustment involved a screen.

SPACIOUSNESS
"If you've got a bloody M2 again, I'll drive us in my Swift," said a taller mate before a three-up road trip. The sight of the CX-80 shut him right up.

LOATHE IT

RIDE QUALITY
The difference in comfort between the CX-80 and Volvo XC90 is night and day.

POWERTRAIN
This feels like the wrong engine for a PHEV powertrain, and the lack of DC charging makes life harder than it needs to be.

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTE

Timely reminders that do-it-all practicality can be found in a hatchback

MILEAGE 4851
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see if the latest hot PHEV Golf is truly a wallet-friendly alternative to the GTI

The popularity of hatchbacks has dipped in recent years, which is sad. Key to this, of course, is SUVs: they account for almost 60% of the new cars sold in the UK so far this year, up from 13% just a decade ago.

Don't get me wrong: I like an SUV. They offer lots of space, a high seating position and a large fuel tank and/or drive battery. Earlier this year, I ran a Dacia Duster Hybrid 140 and heartily proclaimed that it was "all the car you'll ever need". Yet having spent what feels like more time with my Volkswagen Golf GTE than with my wife over the past few months, racking up nearly 2000 miles during that time, I've decided I'd take a hatch over an SUV.

A key reason for this is its ability to do pretty much anything that's asked of it. For example, sometimes a task dictates that I need to swap my car for something larger. Only once over the past few months has that occurred, and that was when I needed to transport quite a few mates and accompanying kit to a festival, which Kris Culmer's enormous Mazda CX-80 (see p56) did brilliantly instead. The rest of the time, despite all that has been thrown at it, the Golf has been a bloody dream.

You don't need a big Tiguan to avoid a return journey to the rubbish tip

For example, in August, the wife and I were undertaking our biannual flat clearout. I needed to get rid of a TV and its stand, clothes, boxes and some other space-filling tat. We were able to fit it all in the back of the VW, seats down (utilising the full 1162 litres of capacity), and still have enough comfortable space for us two in the front.

LOVE IT

SITTING PRETTY

I've driven many cars recently, from SUVs to sports cars, and the Golf's seating position is the one I've loved most. It's low-slung and comfortable yet affords great visibility.

LOATHE IT

CABLE MANAGEMENT

There isn't a dedicated space for storing the GTE's charging cable. In some PHEVs, one can be found under the boot floor, but not here. Instead it takes up valuable room in the boot.

Later that week, having created space from that trip to the dump, I needed to pick up a new TV from a seller 30-odd miles away. I was sceptical, given the TV's 55in corner-to-corner size, but with the rear seats down again, we were able to fit it in. Granted, it was a bit of a squeeze and I needed to move the front seats forward a little, but we got it in. Another tick in a box for the Golf.

A few 200-mile-plus round trips then followed, which the Golf dispatched without fuss, without pain and without much cost: it averaged 49mpg.

We again got close to capacity with a Bristol excursion that required use of all five seats and the boot. It was touch and go in the back, but those who squeezed in said it wasn't uncomfortable.

The wife and I then shot off on a trip that included a wedding and a holiday abroad – meaning lots of luggage space was needed – and again it was a breeze.

On all those occasions, not once did I wish for something bigger, which I believe is the best compliment I could pay a hatchback. The Golf's 4289mm footprint made parking easy, its slick infotainment system kept us entertained and its sporty chassis set-up was engaging no matter the distance of the trip.

Yes, I wish the boot were slightly bigger (I've been putting the rear seats down or putting bags on laps quite a bit) and the cabin were less drab, but I've found that I can live with those niggles, given how accomplished the car otherwise is.

So, the Golf continues to be a great thing and a genuine alternative to any SUV. Whether I would pick the GTE version again isn't so clear, though. It's a question I will answer when it leaves our fleet very soon.

WILL RIMELL

TEST DATA

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTE

Price new £40,140 **Price as tested** £44,435 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 49.0mpg **Last seen** 22.10.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
will.rimell@haymarket.com

BMW X3

We reassess another B58-powered car, the GR Supra

MILEAGE 8487
WHY WE'RE RUNNING Is this version good enough to be the performance X3?

The Toyota is very different but both cars will make you smile

If I were to gaze into a crystal ball and predict what kinds of articles classic car magazines will be pumping out in 25 years' time, staring back at me from within the quartz would be one letter and two numbers: B58.

This well runs deep. A few pages on the history, the birth, the need for a new adaptable straight six that could handle a few configurations would be a gimme; a double-page spread on its tunability and value for money on the used market another. But the big cover lead would be a group test of every car this engine featured in, from BMW 3 Series to Z4 with Toyota, Morgan and Ineos thrown in for good measure.

The article you're reading now, however, is a more personal tale rooted in my love of this engine. To explain it, I've pitted my X3 M50 against the B58 car I think it's most different from: the Toyota GR Supra.

On a superficial level, the hot X3's brashness only highlights the Supra's beauty. When I first saw images of it back in 2018, I was underwhelmed, thinking the styling couldn't hide the Z4 origins. Then when I finally got to drive one, I was unimpressed. The Supra was nothing short of iconic to me, as a member of the PlayStation generation. Gran Turismo, The Fast and the Furious, Max Power: the Supra was the darling for all of these cultural phenomena, and this modern revival was just a car from Munich garbed in a kimono.

Some six years have passed, and I'm happy to admit I was wrong. When this Supra turned up outside my flat, I was amazed by how good looking it was. Time has really been kind to the design. The svelte middle leading to the fatter crown line is classic sports car, and it's so low and purposeful. Okay, there are fake air vents in the bonnet, but the rest of the design is just peachy.

The interior is exactly how I remember: peak BMW. I love having all these buttons and the quality is just superb. My X3's interior has more rough bits of plastic and feels a bit chintzier. Although the infotainment is better (faster, prettier, slicker user interface), there's ambient lighting (I'm nonplussed by this but I know plenty of people who like it) and the seats are much less rigid. But then the Supra doesn't have silly EU speed warnings that you have to turn off every time you drive it – and does have wireless Apple CarPlay.

Out on the road, these two cars aren't actually as chalk and cheese as you might think. The Supra's driving position is on the floor, while the X3's is much higher. The SUV feels much heavier, but it really does a good job of steering. It's also 58bhp and 59lb ft better endowed, which really makes them pretty similar pace-wise, despite the Supra weighing some 500kg less. Both share a ZF eight-speed automatic gearbox: in my X3 it's wonderful, near-telepathic and suited to the more relaxed SUV ethos, whereas in the Supra it can feel a bit languid for a sports car.

Obviously this isn't a straight head-to-head. These are extremely different cars with different ethoses. The thread tying them together is that each is a good car without BMW's heroic 3.0-litre straight six – but made great by it.

MURRAY SCULLION

LOVE IT

UPGRADED
Some time in the Toyota GR Supra has put into sharp focus just how quick this X3 is…

LOATHE IT

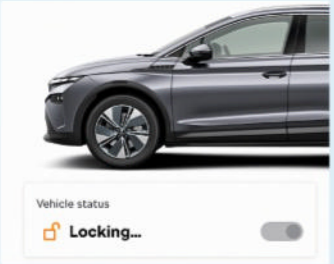
DOWNGRADED
…and how cheap some of the interior bits feel.

TEST DATA

BMW X3 M50
Price new £64,990 **Price as tested** £75,090 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 35.6mpg **Last seen** 22.10.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
murray.scullion@haymarket.com

SNAPSHOTS



SKODA ELROQ

Mileage 4092 **Last seen** 22.10.25
The ability to unlock a car remotely has always seemed frivolous to me: why would I use an app to open a car that I'm nowhere near? But I write this entry between gobfuls of humble pie, as my partner was just able to retrieve a jacket she had left on the back seat of my Elroq while I was 15 miles away at the office – with the key. Better check I locked it again, mind. **FP**

POLESTAR 3

Mileage 5331 **Last seen** 22.10.25
More tech woes: the physical key (you know, the one without any buttons that works only on proximity) now doesn't work at all, making me rely only on the digital key on my phone, which has suddenly become temperamental. I've been locked out of the car a couple of times recently as a result. Again, this is bad tech, woefully executed. Polestar will be taking it back any day now to have a look. **MT**

HONDA HR-V

Mileage 1762 **Last seen** 22.10.25
I'm not the tallest person around, but I have got some quite tall friends who like the HR-V even more than I do. They're seriously impressed by the amazing amount of rear leg room on offer and I think it's even more spacious back there than it is in the front. Plus, Honda's 'Magic' seats mean you get a little bit of storage space down there too. **JH**

USED CARS

HOW TO BUY A FORD MUSTANG MACH-E

IN THE PINK PONY CLUB

A wisely chosen used Mustang Mach-E will leave you feeling quids in

It feels like a new electric SUV is launched every half hour, so you would be forgiven for forgetting about the Ford Mustang Mach-E, which arrived in 2021. It seems as though Ford has too.

When it landed on UK shores, it received good reviews but buyers didn't, ahem, stampede to showrooms and today there continue to be more V8 Mustangs in the classifieds than electric ones.

It's still on sale, despite occupying a very similar part of the market to Ford's newer Capri crossover, but the Mustang EV is a more rational buy as a used car than a new one.

First of all, it has a high list price new – £51,000 for the Extended Range (ER), which is the one you'll want – so you can save a packet in depreciation by buying used. A second-hand ER can be had for less than £17,000 these days.

Second, a used one looks almost identical to a new one, inside and out, because Ford has not done much to update the Mach-E since its launch, including its range.

Talking of which, the 379 miles Ford claims for the ER models is very impressive and that's probably why they account for most of the classified ads. Power is drawn from a 91kWh (usable) battery, which is good for a real-world 300 miles even at motorway speeds. We recorded a respectable 3.2mpkWh in our road test and the claimed charging speed is an acceptable 150kW.

There's also a Standard Range (SR) model with 273 miles of claimed range, or 292 miles in cars from 2022 onwards, but it's not a great deal cheaper second-hand.

Extended Range RWD, like this car, is the one to go for

What we said then

23 JUNE 2021

"An encouragingly good EV, and one that clearly attempts to bring some dynamic personality into a class that's generally lacking. The powertrain provides excellent range; the chassis brings satisfaction. This is the most pleasing driver's car of its ilk."

Both variants are readily available with all-wheel drive but we wouldn't bother because it knocks as much as 50 miles from the range and the rear-driven single-motor car rides sweeter.

Performance is strong across the board. SR cars use a 261bhp rear-mounted motor for a 7.0sec 0-62mph time, while the AWD version shaves a second off that with its extra torque and power.

The ER gets a beefed-up rear motor for 286bhp, while the all-wheel-drive version's 346bhp gets from 0-62mph in just over 5sec.

There are no Boss 302s or Shelby GT500s with this 'Stang, but there are two performance editions. The GT is the spicy version with 480bhp, which means 0-62mph in under 4sec. Naturally, efficiency is reduced and you'll be lucky to see more than 250 miles on a charge. The ride becomes bone-numbingly hard too.

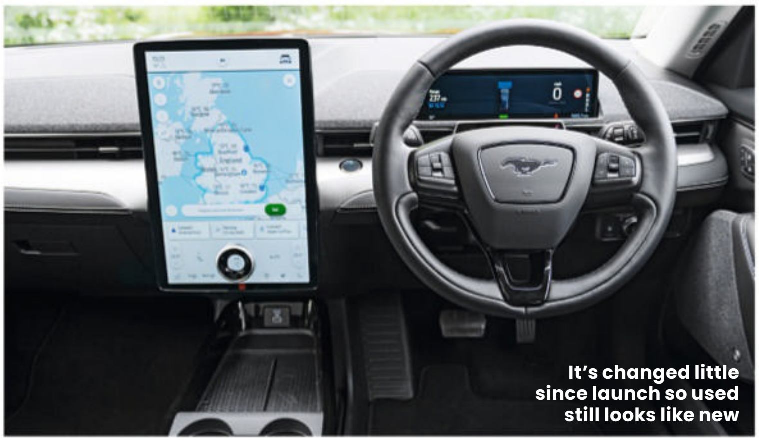
The other performance model is the Rally, which has the same powertrain as the GT but gets a 20mm suspension lift to aid gravel travel and backside comfort, smaller WRC-style wheels and chunky tyres. With the added wing, it makes the Mach-E look like a rally car for the road and it's genuinely capable and good fun on loose surfaces. If you can't stretch to a Huracán Sterrato or 911 Dakar, it's a good rough-road alternative – with a much bigger boot and a back seat.

Thanks to a large Tesla-style 16in touchscreen on all Mach-Es, the cabin doesn't look dated. Being picky, we would like more physical buttons and some brighter, higher-quality feeling trim options.

That said, the vibe is generally good. Ford avoided putting 'Ford' badges inside and out so that neighbours and friends aren't blindfolded by their badge snobbery, and it could well be mistaken for something German.

It's stylish, practical, decent to drive and great value second-hand. No, it's not perfect, but when has a Mustang ever been that?

ALEX WOLSTENHOLME



It's changed little since launch so used still looks like new

> **"The Rally has the GT's 480bhp powertrain. It's genuinely capable and good fun on loose surfaces"**

How to get one in your garage

AN OWNER'S VIEW

DAKOTA WARD

"Coming from the perspective of an SR owner (240-mile real-world range), the decision to go for an ER for my wife has been a game-changer. That 60-70 extra miles ensures three hours before a stop. It's my wife's first EV and she is in love. My biggest frustrations are that the driver's seat doesn't tilt, the air-con controls aren't front and centre on the screen and there is no mechanical button for the rear hatch."

BUYER BEWARE...

■ PAINTWORK
There have been reports of poor-quality paint. Look out for flaking on the roof and spoiler especially.

■ SOFTWARE
Some owners have complained about laggy screens that crash, change the settings and open doors without warning, even with the latest updates installed. Just ensure the car you're test driving is responsive.

■ STEERING WHEEL BUTTONS
They can become sticky, which can make them useless at best and result in unwanted setting changes at worst. It's potentially expensive to fix because a whole new wheel may have to be fitted.

■ 12V BATTERY
The small 12V battery can cause problems for Mach-E owners. It can fail unexpectedly, blacking out the systems while driving or leaving you locked out. Some owners suggest proactively replacing it after three years.

■ RATTLES AND LEAKS
Squeaks and rattles may be prevalent in a Mach-E. Also check for signs of a leaking sunroof.

■ TYRES
This is a big, heavy EV with a lot of performance on tap (especially in GT spec) so it's not surprising that some owners have reported excessive tyre wear. Check the tread depth on all four corners, and budget up to £800 for the best rubber – or use it as a bargaining chip when negotiating a purchase.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

Beyond the battery and drivetrain options, there are no trim levels for the Mach-E. But there are a couple of options to be aware of.

One is BlueCruise, which is the only hands-free driving tech

approved in the UK and can be activated on most motorways. However, you still have to pay attention, so its advantage over standard adaptive cruise control isn't that great. You can always take out a monthly subscription if you're desperate to try it, though.

The Tech Pack brings a hands-free tailgate, Bang & Olufsen sound system, panoramic roof and powered seats.

A heat pump became standard for the 2025 model year and improves range during the winter. However, it has made the frunk considerably smaller – previously a big practicality trump card for the Mach-E.

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£16,000-£19,999
A mix of 2021 and 2022 cars with 50,000-80,000 miles, including some big-battery models.

£20,000-£26,999
A large selection of low-mileage big- and small-battery cars, some even on 24-plates.

£27,000-£40,000
Early, 50,000-mile-plus GTs come into play here, as well as nearly new and delivery-mileage Extended Range versions.

£40,000 AND ABOVE
Although a new Mach-E officially starts at £42,000, you can get a pre-registered GT for that price. A few thousand more buys a Rally.

ONE WE FOUND

FORD MUSTANG MACH-E 91KWH EXTENDED RANGE, 2021, 56,500 MILES, £19,999
For something that looks good, drives nicely, offers a strong claimed range, is four years old with a little over 50,000 miles and costs less than £20k, this looks like a great-value electric SUV.

My car & I

The underrated, undervalued 911

Less kind observers call them 'fried egg lights', those melted-looking clusters on the nose of the 996-generation Porsche 911 of 1997 to 2006, before in the next breath bemoaning the model's move from air to water cooling for the engine. Not Rohan Cummings: he loves these features of his 996 and what they represent.

"I like this generation because it's about Porsche moving forward," he says. "It knew it had to do something to improve the 911's emissions. Regarding the lights, they signalled the change and are like those on the 1997 911 GT1 Evo race car. If people don't like them, there are headlight covers that will make the car look like the 997 – but why not just buy a 997? The 996 is underrated and undervalued, and buying one in the right condition is an investment opportunity."

Rohan has owned his 1998-registered 996 for 12 months. It's a 3.4-litre manual cabriolet, which when he bought it had covered 81,000 miles. He has put only another 1000 miles on it since.

"I have quite a collection of cars that includes a Porsche 928 manual, which I love," says Rohan. "I used to own a 986 Boxster, which gave me a soft spot for the 996 of the same era. When this came up for

Our cars

The pros and cons of buying local

BY FELIX PAGE

I like to think I'm the sort of person who doesn't follow trends, who does things just that little bit differently from everyone else – so here's my newly acquired Ford Fiesta.

If I'd had my way, my partner would be running around in a Daihatsu Cuore Avanzato or a Talbot Matra Rancho, having passed her driving test a few months ago. Alas, her requirements for a first car were rather more centred on efficiency, reliability and practicality than esotericism, so it came down to a supermini, and this 2009 1.4-litre Titanium 5dr finally won us over by virtue of being fairly decent value, the right colour and less than five miles from home.

It's fine, really, but for the £2500 we paid I might have asked for a better-smelling interior, a working boot release and carpets that were still glued to the floor. It's not holding up badly for a 130,000-mile supermini, though, truth be told: it still pulls well, steers tightly and stops straight.

I was rather disappointed that we only managed around 30mpg over the first 100 miles, but I attributed it to my newly qualified partner's rev-happy suburban driving style and assumed the figure would improve as her right foot lightened with time.

That is until I stopped to pump up a slightly pillowy rear tyre and discovered we were shockingly low on pressure at each corner. I'm expecting a massive increase in efficiency now that they're all properly pumped up, and the car is tangibly more responsive and better-riding, to boot. One pound well spent.

Fiesta needs a few fixes but seems solid overall

This was 911's first water-cooled engine

"Everyone says you should look for bore scoring on a 996. I admit that I didn't"

Leather has worn but interior is holding up well, just like the hood

sale, I thought I'd try it. It's quite exceptional and I've been very happy with it.

"Being a cabrio, it's got the feeling of the Boxster – that sense of the road immediately behind your head. In the 911 the engine is behind the rear wheels but in the Boxster it's over them, but they kind of feel the same. Also, being a manual, like my Boxster, the 911 is just as engaging. And I can't fault the 911's build quality: although it's a cabrio, it feels rock-solid over bumpy roads."

Rohan knows his way around cars and wasn't about to take any chances when he bought his 911: "For me to consider it, it had to have a very good service history. Also, I made sure it had had its IMS bearing replaced. It had a new clutch, so that was okay. Everyone says that when looking at one of these cars, you should check for bore scoring. I admit that I didn't, but I have no reason to believe it's one of the affected cars. In any case, only a small number of 996s experienced the problem. The model can suffer quite bad corrosion, but I didn't find any, and fingers crossed it's not bubbling away somewhere unseen. The interior was in good condition and the hood has since proved to be watertight. On the road, the car is very quiet and feels totally bulletproof."

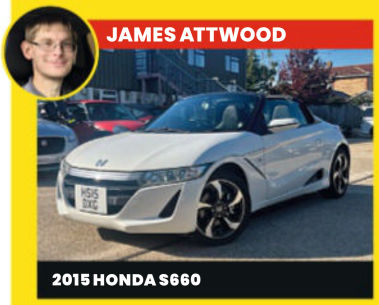
Being handy with a set of spanners, Rohan claims his 911 is easy to maintain: "It's a fairly straightforward car. I once had a Ferrari 360 that had a lot of electrical issues. Fortunately, the 996 is much less complicated."

It's definitely a keeper, he says, but parked next to his car is a 996 coupé looking, to my eyes, a lot sportier. Would he rather have that over the cabrio, I ask? He doesn't hesitate: "If you have a regular 911, the cabrio is absolutely fine as an alternative to the coupé, but any more powerful and I'd choose the coupé every time."

JOHN EVANS

Head to head

JAMES ATTWOOD



2015 HONDA S660

VS

FELIX PAGE

1994 AUTOZAM AZ-1

Brief: Find a left-field JDM grey import for no more than £45,000

JA What's cooler than a kei car? A convertible sports kei car. This Honda S660 costs £15,495 and is small, cheap, brilliant fun. No further questions – I believe I take the win here. But you might as well show me what you've picked.

FP Close but not quite: the answer is a sports kei car with gullwing doors. Sure, the S660 is adorable, but Mazda's Autozam AZ-1 is far more dramatic and purposeful, without taking up any more space. And it's only, ahem, £29,995.

JA Well played: I'm loving those gullwings and the rally-esque foglights. But given kei car rules mean both are limited to 63bhp, they will be equally sprightly to drive, so I'll take the one that's half the price and 21 years newer.

FP No, I can't claim a performance edge, despite the 'Zam's baby-F40 looks, but I do have rarity on my side: fewer than 5000 were made and only a handful are in the UK.

JA You got me there. It's impossibly cool in that weird Japanese sort of way. Which got me thinking: with a bit of haggling, you could buy both these cars within our £45k budget. Seems like a perfect teeny tiny two-sports-car garage to me.

FP Not to mention indefatigably practical. Who needs passengers? Or luggage? Or leg room?

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

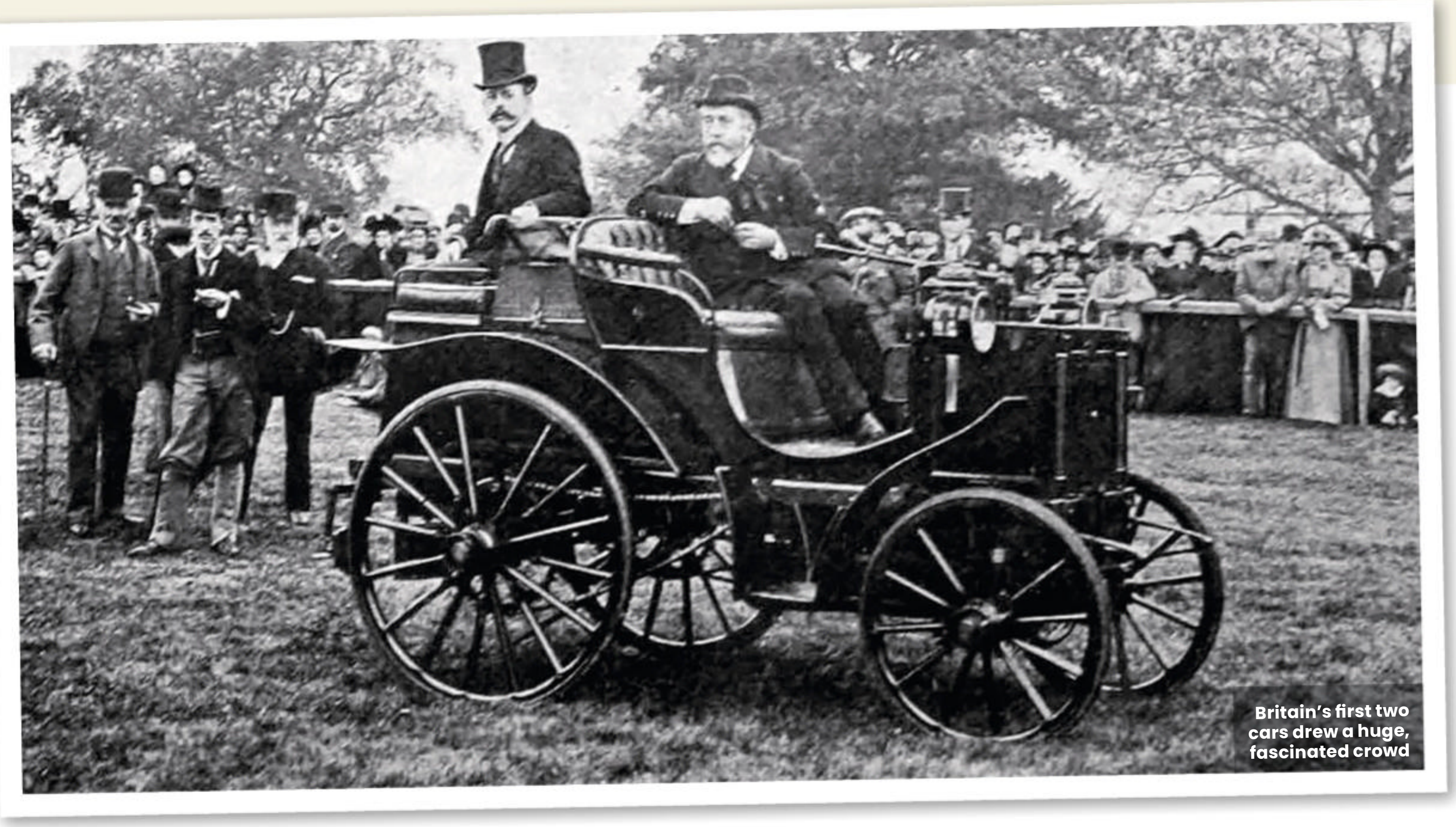
BMW M3 CONVERTIBLE
2003, 73,000 miles, £18,999
This beautifully specced E46 M3's 3.2-litre six makes 43bhp more than the 3.4-litre one in the 911 (left), has a slick manual 'box and features £7000 worth of options. Chop-top M3s can be cheaper but this has a solid history and reasonable mileage.

SEAT IBIZA 1.2 TSI SE SPORT
2016, 71,000 miles, £4999
Felix snagged a bargain with his Fiesta (bottom left), and this newer Seat Ibiza looks similarly good value: it's £4999 and costs only £35 to tax annually. Better still, it's fitted with the reliable 1.2 TSI petrol engine, which has more than enough pep for daily jaunts and will exceed 50mpg.

CITROEN C6 3.0i V6 EXCLUSIVE
2008, 103,000 miles, £8495
A C6 with a petrol V6 is super-rare. This privately sold example has a full service history and an MOT until May, and being in Exclusive spec it's full of all kinds of gadgets and luxuries. Ride quality is second to none too.

AUDI A6 AVANT 3.0 TDI V6 SE QUATTRO
2011, 77,500 miles, £9990
Winter chariots don't get more upmarket or refined than this A6. It has 4WD for peace of mind when driving in snow, a sweet and efficient 3.0-litre diesel V6, lovely Goodwood Green paint and a full Audi service history.

The Autocar Lost in the archive



Britain's first two cars drew a huge, fascinated crowd

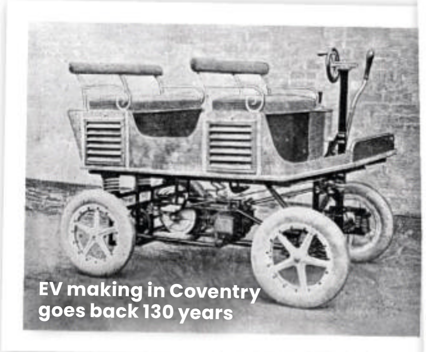
Origin story: Autocar turns 130

Last Sunday, 2 November, marked 130 years since the first appearance of 'a journal published in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage' in Britain. The Autocar was created in a period that seems alien to modern minds – yet can also be strangely familiar. In celebration, here we revisit the nine issues from our debut year of 1895.

Our first article pondered what this invention would be called. Our incorrect prediction was a handy shortening of 'automobile carriage' or 'automatic carriage'. Then our treatise: "Every new movement is fostered and encouraged by publicity and the free letting in upon it of the light of public opinion. The power of the press of this country as an educator and a moulder of sentiment is unparalleled."

Surely a close second was the opportunity to see a car in action, afforded to the public for the first time at Tunbridge Wells in Kent. Two well-to-do gentlemen, Evelyn Ellis and David Salomons, lapped the agricultural showground at up to 15mph before 5000 people, in their Panhard and Peugeot cars – the first two ever imported.

We also discussed the tricky legal situation faced by pioneers (motorised traffic came under the Highways and Locomotives Act 1878) – and the problem reared its ugly head just a week later, as one JH Knight of Farnham in Surrey was fined 2s 6d for driving without a licence from the county council.



EV making in Coventry goes back 130 years

After an American petrol car in issue one, we detailed an electric car from Coventry cycle maker Blumfield & Garrard in issue two. With an 80-mile range and a top speed of 10mph, the "strange beastie" impressed us greatly on a ride around the workshop.

A week later, we learned from one Harry Lawson that a firm was being formed for British car making on "a very large scale", using patents licensed from Germany's Daimler – the inventor of the car in 1885 – and American newcomer Edward Pennington. We were excited about his engine, since by using a 'water jacket' it "produces both heat and cold, and in such proportion that the temperature of the cylinder is never greater than that of an ordinary steam engine, and requires a minimum quantity of water". It soon transpired that Lawson and Pennington were conmen.

Pennington engine wasn't all it was cracked up to be

French gentlemen formed ACF to educate the public about cars

On 12 November, the world's first automobile club was founded, with "the best men in France" among its members. We said: "While intended for the convenience of members, and especially of provincial autocar users who may wish to be in touch with Paris, [the ACF] will do everything in its power to advance the interests of the new industry."

In the French capital, "one of the chief customers for autocars is the tradesman. With an eye to [their] value as an advertisement, he is employing vans which excite a certain amount of curiosity in the way in which they glide about the crowded streets without causing the slightest inconvenience to the general traffic."

At London's annual cycle show, motorised vehicles were due to feature for the first time – but we had to report that "there has been much cry, and is little wool", as only two cars and two tricycles appeared. Still, "the attending public, doubtless considering that half a loaf is better than no bread, gather in crowds round both vehicles and tricycles, and evince the liveliest interest in the questions of their pace, weight, cost, and mode of propulsion".

The French could already refuel their autocars in most towns, and leading oil firm Messieurs Deutsch was "making arrangements for the establishment of depots for the sale of petroleum spirit throughout the country". "It is evident," we commented, "that the same thing will have to be done in England, where petroleum spirit is an almost unknown commodity among the tradespeople."

How long did it take between the first car journey in Britain and the first call for a tax on cars? Less than five months. The Scarborough Post has the dubious honour, opining that "a registration fee of 10s a year, fixed at once, would hardly be felt, and would certainly have no effect in discouraging the introduction of new motors, and might be the means of adding substantially to the revenue". Our response? "Undoubtedly, the best policy which the government can adopt is to permit the development of the autocar to take place, as has been the case with the cycle, absolutely unchecked by taxes or restrictive legislation. There is such a thing as killing the goose which may lay the golden eggs."

Meanwhile, a London legal firm lobbied in our letters section for a reinterpretation of the Locomotive Act under the logic that "the word 'locomotive' is defined in every dictionary as 'a steam engine'".

On 14 December, on the topic of EVs, we commented: "Now and then we hear of inventions of marvellous accumulators that are destined to change the whole face of road traction, but up to the present they seem to have been rumours and nothing more." One Victorian equivalent of solid-state tech came from an H Levetus of Birmingham, who told us in an interview that his forthcoming EV would "travel about a hundred miles", then "by applying a quart of slimy material it can go for another hundred". Er, righto…

Another legal issue arose a week later, as John Koosen of Southsea was fined 1s for driving without a 'red flag man' walking ahead, "the magistrates being unanimous in the opinion that the carriage was a locomotive". "It would appear to us that the unreasoning opposition of the agricultural interest, oblivious of the ultimate benefit which will accrue to them by the introduction of the autocar, finds full vent in rural Hampshire," we huffed.

Matters seemed better in the empire's colonies, free as they were from "dunderheaded magistrates and faddish legislators": Sri Lanka's government had bought a number of Daimlers for "carrying the mails from the General Post Office to the railway stations at Colombo, entailing a saving to the service of about 60% as compared with conveyance by horse power". And we envied the French even more, as Paris held "the first exhibition of autocars worth mentioning in the beginning of the renaissance of these vehicles in the future".

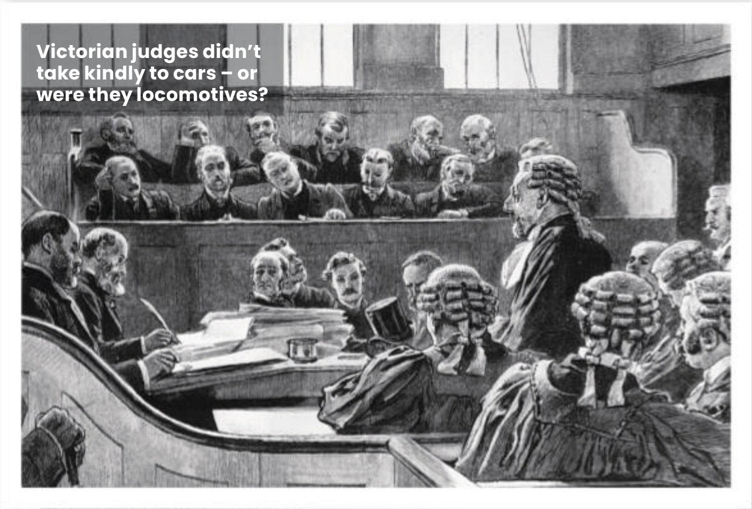
Some consolation perhaps came from the fact that the Americans were "more backward even than are makers in England" despite "not having even the excuse of labouring under the disabilities of obsolete laws". Indeed, when a Chicago newspaper arranged a reliability trial, just two of the nearly 100 entries were actually ready.

Happily, our first year ended on a positive note, as London County Council "decided to recommend that the government be asked to abolish the restriction so as to allow horseless carriages to be used in the streets of [the capital]" and the Newcastle and Gateshead chamber of commerce unanimously voted to repeal the Locomotives Act "so far as it relates to mechanically propelled carriages and waggons".

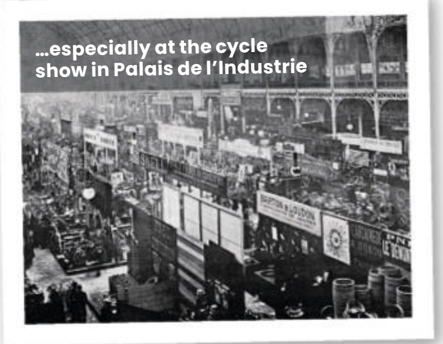
Full of hope, we predicted: "Now that mechanical vehicles can be driven 10 or 15 miles an hour for very long periods with only occasional halts for replenishing the water and petroleum spirit, there is nothing to prevent the populations of large towns dispersing into hitherto almost inaccessible parts of the country, and enjoying the health and freedom which are often denied them in the busy haunts of men. This easy transport [also] promises to help in solving one of the most serious problems which have been vexing the soul of the political economist for years past – the desertion of people from the country for the towns."

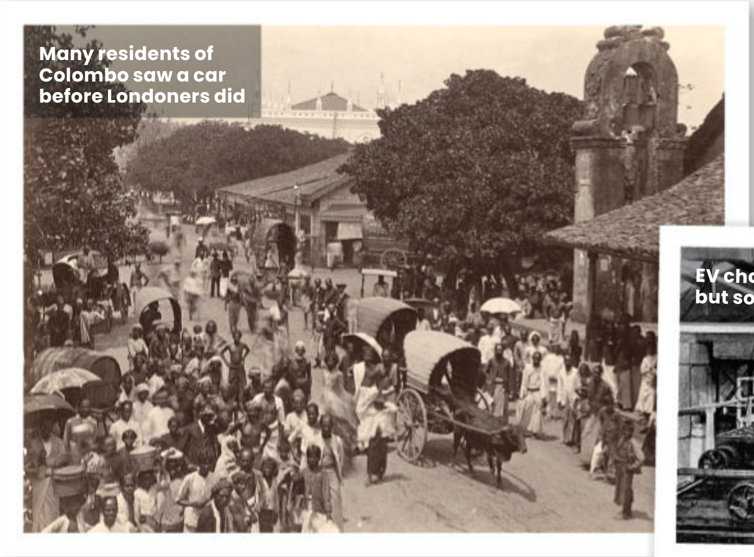
KRIS CULMER

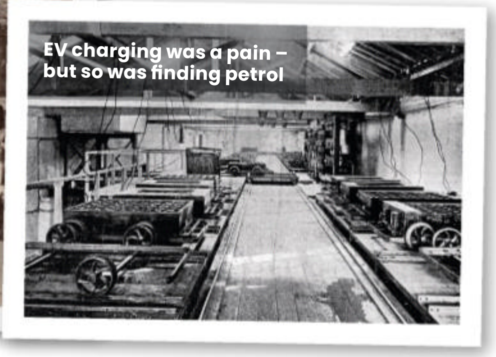
> **"By applying a quart of slimy material, it can go another hundred miles"**


Victorian judges didn't take kindly to cars – or were they locomotives?

In 1895, cars were a fairly common sight in Paris…


…especially at the cycle show in Palais de l'Industrie


Many residents of Colombo saw a car before Londoners did


EV charging was a pain – but so was finding petrol

Britain in 1895

- The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty is founded.
- Poet and playwright Oscar Wilde is jailed for homosexuality.
- Conservatives beat Liberals in a general election, led by Lord Salisbury.
- First-class cricket is defined.
- Rugby league is created.
- In London, the first indoor promenade concert is held.
- HP Sauce is introduced.
- HG Wells' seminal sci-fi novel The Time Machine is published.
- The London School of Economics opens.
- On Anglesey, the final turnpike toll is removed.
- Sunderland win the Football League title, while Aston Villa lift the FA Cup.
- The army adopts the Lee-Enfield rifle.
- In Africa, colonists establish Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), annex Tongaland (in South Africa) and start a fourth war against the Ashanti (in Ghana).
- Future King George VI is born.

If you want to get lost in the archive…

Scan the QR code to gain access to Autocar issues from 1895 to the present day.

GETTY IMAGES

URGENTLY WANTED
2 CHARACTER PLATE LIKE 7R OR 4A CASH WAITING
GENUINE PRIVATE SELLERS!
PLEASE CALL

SILVERSPEED

Celebrating 30 Years

Dealing in interesting number plates and cars for nearly 30 years been in this magazine for over 20 years!

Tel 07961 808069 • Email Silverspeedlondon@gmail.com

URGENTLY WANTED FOR CASH
DATELESS REGISTRATIONS
AND ALL CARS
ANYTHING CONSIDERED
PLEASE CALL!!

NEW STOCK

NEW MAM4V	£2,995
NEW VVVI42	£2,495
NEW VJX3	£5,995
VJVI	£15,995
I NOB	£39,995
808 V	(Bobs or Bob 5th) £5995
AHE4P	£4,995
RXV 628	£1295
AMIIDUO	£1,495
NEW I6VET	£4,995
RYKIY	(Ricky) £5995
RRRIP	£7,995
2I VE	£12,995
ROL7S	£12,995
I58A	£24,995
AKB88R	£14,995
MMM4M	£9,995
6I5NUO	£1,695
A555SHA	£3,995
MEDI4A	£5,995
VYJ I00	£1,695
8 AHM	£12,995
NEW I230T	£7,995
MUD 880Y	£4,995
VVV7V	£6,995
OOA8A	£3,595
8I9 JAY	£7,995
700 K	£29,995
ARI5BUS	£1,295
RADID	£6,995

ULTIMATE INVESTMENT RANGE

I40C	£29,995
I40X	£24,995
58V	£54,995
I00C	£19,995
KCN I	£19,995
I X0X	£29,995
I VTV	£14,995
I VDN	£13,995

NAME RELATED PLATES

MUS55A	£16,995
AII5HAB	£6,995
NAD74A	£4,995
GUL74M	£4,995
N486 ELA	£4,995 (Nabella)
UDDIP	£3,995
M4X VW	£2,995
RI EHN	£9,995

CLASSY3X3'S

333 OXU	£1,495
333 UXX	£1,495
444 XAA	£1,995
447 LBF	£1,495
RFO 447	£1,495
600 VUY	£1,995
60I DTO	£1,395
6I5 NUO	£1,995
PHH 6I8	£1,995
666VRX	£2,495
747 OYE	£2,495
I0I VOY	£1,395
999 EKK	£2,995

GREAT VALUE 2X3'S

I0 XWE	£2,495
80 VXP	£2,495

SPECIAL INTEREST

HOO6OOH	£1,995
MAA2A	£3,995
OCT 4V	£3,495
I7SDM	£6,495
VEX50	£4,995

GREAT VALUE BARGAINS

J3RRX	£1,375
R2HRO	£1,375
RO5IGAY	£495

URGENTLY WANTED
LOW MILEAGE
SPECIAL CARS
PROMPT PAYMENT
PLEASE CALL

Rolls-Royce Spectre 2024 black with ivory trim. only 800 miles. Amazing electric vehicle full warranty to 2027 cost new £360k amazing value £269,995

OverFinch Range Rover LWB 2019/69 only 29k miles 5.0 supercharge petrol every conceivable option including full reclining rear seats, cooling Massage seats Pan Roof carbon fibre kit the list is too long. cost new £220k now £54,995

CHRISTMAS EARLY BIRD OFFER!

Save up to 20% extra!

Make their Christmas with a weekly dose of automotive joy

Take advantage of our Christmas Early Bird offer and buy a gift subscription from just £30.99 for 13 issues, saving £33 on the shop price.

Crafted exclusively for those who live and breathe cars, Autocar is the present that will rev up their festive season.

SAVE £33

VERDICT NEW 296 SPECIALE
FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK
AUTOCAR
NEW TT DRIVEN
EXCLUSIVE The future of Audi – and an icon reborn
NEW 911 'THE BEST SUPERCAR EVER'
REJOICE, IT'S A NEW MANUAL COUPE
BARGAIN OF THE YEAR? A £1000 DACIA

Order by 1 December Call 0344 848 8807 quoting X25EBPA
Visit www.themagazineshop.com/X25EBPA/aca

SCAN ME TO ORDER

TERMS AND CONDITIONS This is a UK-only offer; for overseas offers, please visit themagazineshop.com/X25EBPA/aca or call +44 (0) 1604 251 461. All savings are based on the UK cover price of £4.99 and is correct as of November 2025. Please allow up to 35 days for delivery of your first issue. Direct Debit rates are valid for one year, after which they are subject to change; should prices change, we will inform you in writing. Should you wish to cancel your subscription, it will be cancelled on expiry of the current term, which will not be refundable, other than in exceptional circumstances. Details of the Direct Debit Guarantee are available upon request. **Offer ends 1 December 2025.**

ROAD TEST RESULTS

Autocar's history of empirical road testing is the longest in the world. For more than a century, we have been verifying, scrutinising, describing and illustrating new cars in unparalleled detail. Driving impressions have always been a key part of this, around which the empirical tests have changed.

In pre-war years, we concerned ourselves with braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later our attention shifted to take in acceleration, top speed, stopping distance and cruising noise level.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated states of battery charge.

Our tests are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car – and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into that century of road testing with a subscription to the digital Autocar archive (visit themagazineshop.com/2025ED/ACA).

Matt Saunders, road test editor

STAR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Autocar star ratings aren't like those you may read elsewhere. We don't simply give the best car in any given class five stars, the worst one star and filter the rest in between.

Rather than thinking in entirely relative terms, we rank cars according to more abstract definitions of their performance, functionality and fitness for purpose, so that every particular verdict means something and has a degree of permanence.

We also penalise cars up to a star for what we consider particularly conspicuous and regressive failings concerning active safety systems or missing instrumentation or physical secondary controls.

☆ Hopeless, egregious. In some cases, potentially dangerous.
⯪ Appalling. An emphatic failure.
★ Very poor. Consistently flawed or seriously misconceived.
★⯪ Inadequate. Sub-standard in key areas.
★★ Mediocre. Acceptable at best.
★★⯪ Competent. Mostly average, with very few highlights.
★★★ Respectable. Consistently decent, with some strengths.
★★★⯪ Good. Well rounded and competitive in key areas.
★★★★ Very good. Sets some new class standards and misses few.
★★★★⯪ Excellent. Extends several key class standards.
★★★★★ Exceptional, unsurpassed. All but flawless.

ABARTH

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
500 Esseesse	★★★★☆	25.3.09	Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.	7.6	6.5	1135	35.8	-
500e Turismo	★★★⯪☆	9.8.23	A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.	6.9	6.4	1395	-	142
595 Competizione	★★★⯪☆	26.2.14	Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.	7.5	6.4	1135	39.2	-

ALFA ROMEO

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Giulia Quadrifoglio	★★★★⯪	29.3.17	Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.	4.5	3.2	1700	35.7	-
Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione	★★★⯪☆	3.1.18	Likeable, if short of class's usual refinements.	6.8	7.0	1815	49.7	-
Stelvio Quadrifoglio	★★★⯪☆	9.1.19	A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.	4.0	3.3	1931	31.9	-
Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD	★★★★☆	28.6.23	Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.	5.7	5.3	1784	32.2	-

ALPINE

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A110 Première Edition	★★★★★	16.5.18	Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.	4.7	3.8	1125	45.6	-
A110 Légende GT	★★★★⯪	9.3.22	The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.	4.8	3.9	1140	40.2	-
A110 R	★★★⯪☆	15.11.23	Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.	4.2	3.5	1094	39.7	-

ARIEL

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atom 4	★★★★★	9.10.19	Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.	3.2	2.4	680	39.2	-

ASTON MARTIN

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Vantage	★★★★⯪	18.9.24	Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.	3.5	2.6	1745	28.5	-
DBS Superleggera	★★★★★	21.11.18	Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.	3.7	2.7	1910	25.6	-
Vanquish	★★★★⯪	26.3.25	Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT.	3.1	2.3	1951	25.8	-
DBX 707	★★★★☆	30.11.22	A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.	3.3	2.8	2278	26.2	-

AUDI

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition	★★★⯪☆	2.10.19	Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.	7.9	8.4	1209	57.0	-
S3 Sportback	★★★⯪☆	18.11.20	Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.	4.8	4.2	1552	39.0	-
RS3 Sportback Carbon Vorsprung	★★★★☆	9.7.25	Uber-A3 refuses to be defined just by its truly special five-cylinder engine.	3.6	3.3	1619	34.1	-
S5 Launch Edition	★★★★☆	15.1.25	Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.	4.1	3.8	2027	33.7	-
A6 E-Hybrid Launch Edition Quattro	★★★☆☆	1.10.25	Big executive saloon is spec-dependent – and misses its marks here.	5.8	5.2	2197	40.0	52
S6 E-tron Avant Launch Edition	★★★⯪☆	16.4.25	Strong technical showing is undermined by price and lack of discernible character.	3.7	2.9	2346	2.8	256
RS6 Avant GT	★★★★☆	5.2.25	Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.	3.2	2.7	2144	26.3	-
A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport	★★★⯪☆	11.7.18	Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.	5.8	5.3	1880	53.1	-
A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport	★★★⯪☆	17.6.20	Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be.	-	-	2330	-	-
E-tron 55 Quattro	★★★★⯪	26.6.19	A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.	5.4	4.2	2569	-	218
E-tron S Quattro	★★★⯪☆	2.6.21	A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.	4.2	3.6	2643	-	-
Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport	★★★⯪☆	9.11.16	Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.	8.1	8.2	1316	-	-
SQ2 Quattro S Tronic	★★★★☆	20.3.19	More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.	4.5	4.1	1530	34.5	-
Q4 E-tron 40 Sport	★★★⯪☆	7.7.21	Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.	8.1	7.8	2112	-	-
Q5 TDI Quattro 204PS S Line	★★★⯪☆	14.5.25	Pleasant and competitive but no particular step forward.	6.7	7.1	2072	42.6	-
Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1	★★★⯪☆	2.10.24	EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.	5.3	4.3	-	2.8	247
Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line	★★★★☆	12.8.15	Plush, suave and spacious but so-so to drive.	6.2	6.2	2245	-	-
SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro	★★★★⯪	26.10.16	A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.	5.1	4.5	2330	37.9	-
Q8 50 TDI S Line	★★★★☆	26.9.18	Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.	6.9	6.7	2285	40.1	-
R8 V10 Plus	★★★★☆	30.12.15	Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.	3.1	2.6	1730	-	-
S E-tron GT	★★★★☆	2.4.25	Audi's super-EV holds great appeal in its purest form but isn't at the bleeding edge.	3.1	2.4	2361	2.8	262

BENTLEY

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Bentayga W12	★★★★⯪	18.5.16	Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.	4.9	4.4	2440	-	-
Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline	★★★★☆	24.4.24	Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.	4.4	3.8	2600	25.6	-
Continental GT Speed	★★★★☆	22.12.21	Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.	3.4	2.7	2279	22.0	-
Continental GTC V8 S	★★★★⯪	19.4.23	Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.	3.6	3.2	2295	29.1	-
Continental GT Speed Hybrid First Edition	★★★★☆	16.4.25	Electrons make fastest GT quicker but not necessarily better.	3.1	2.5	2462	28.0	47
Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner	★★★★⯪	17.8.22	Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.	4.4	3.9	2596	30.1	28

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Flying Spur Speed First Edition	★★★★☆	21.5.25	Hulking V8 hybrid powertrain broadens Spur's remit and skyrockets performance.	3.2	2.7	2750	26.7	44

BMW

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
120 M Sport	★★★⯪☆	31.12.24	Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.	7.3	6.8	1489	45.8	-
218i M Sport Gran Coupé	★★★☆☆	8.4.20	Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.	8.8	8.4	1375	58.2	-
220i M Sport Coupé	★★★★☆	1.6.22	A good coupé rather than a great sports car.	7.3	7.3	1546	46.8	-
M2 Coupé Manual	★★★★⯪	12.7.23	Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.	4.5	3.8	1687	32.1	-
320d M Sport Auto	★★★★★	15.5.19	BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.	6.9	6.8	1639	63.3	-
330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring	★★★★⯪	15.1.20	An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.	5.5	5.2	1922	52.6	-
330e M Sport	★★★★⯪	1.7.20	Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.	-	-	1740	-	-
M440i xDrive	★★★★☆	6.1.21	A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.	4.1	3.7	1775	44.0	-
M4 Competition	★★★★⯪	21.4.21	A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.	3.9	2.9	1800	32.7	-
M4 CS	★★★★☆	23.4.25	Stunning performance and pace comes with costs that aren't so easy to justify.	2.9	2.5	1747	32.4	-
i4 M50	★★★★☆	19.1.22	Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.	4.1	3.2	2248	-	186
M4 CSL	★★★★☆	16.11.22	A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.	3.6	2.7	1625	31.1	-
M5	★★★⯪☆	29.1.25	A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.	3.5	2.8	2373	27.3	35
i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro	★★★⯪☆	29.11.23	Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.	5.4	4.4	2213	-	235
550e xDrive M Sport Pro	★★★★☆	3.4.24	Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.	4.4	3.5	2232	40.1	47
750e xDrive M Sport	★★★★⯪	15.10.25	Look beyond its divisive design for a highly accomplished limousine.	4.8	4.2	2472	35.6	47
i7 xDrive60 M Sport	★★★★⯪	15.2.23	It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.	4.5	3.4	2758	-	264
840d xDrive	★★★★☆	16.1.19	A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.	5.0	4.6	1901	49.2	-
M8 Competition Convertible	★★★⯪☆	5.2.20	Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.	3.3	2.7	2020	31.6	-
M8 Competition	★★★⯪☆	3.6.20	Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.	-	-	1960	-	-
X1 xDrive23i M Sport	★★★⯪☆	25.1.23	A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.	6.4	6.0	1800	45.6	-
X4 M Competition	★★★☆☆	13.11.19	Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.	4.0	3.3	2028	29.0	-
X5 xDrive30d M Sport	★★★★☆	2.1.19	Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.	6.6	6.6	2279	43.1	-
X6 M Competition	★★★☆☆	20.3.24	Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.	3.5	3.1	2442	29.3	-
X7 M60i xDrive	★★★★☆	29.3.23	Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.	4.2	3.7	2600	28.9	-
iX xDrive60 M Sport	★★★★⯪	9.7.25	Took the luxury EV to new heights in 2022 and nobody has caught up yet. Still great.	4.2	3.3	2637	2.7	314
Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack	★★★★☆	21.8.24	Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.	5.7	5.9	1561	36.9	-

BMW ALPINA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
B3 GT Touring	★★★★⯪	15.1.25	Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.	3.3	2.7	1910	29.4	-
B8 Gran Coupé	★★★★☆	22.9.21	Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.	3.5	2.8	2100	-	-

BYD

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Dolphin Surf Boost	★★★★☆	6.8.25	Efficient, well packaged and well priced. Its minor transgressions are forgivable.	12.0	13.0	1385	3.9	173
Atto 3 Design	★★★☆☆	31.5.23	Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.	7.0	6.2	1787	-	201
Seal Design	★★★⯪☆	17.1.24	Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.	5.8	4.7	2116	-	279
Sealion 7 Comfort	★★★☆☆	5.11.25	Not quite the swish, advanced, sophisticated EV they would have you believe.	6.5	5.2	-	2.7	272

CATERHAM

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Seven 160	★★★★☆	20.11.13	Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.	8.4	8.7	510	44.8	-
Seven 620S	★★★★⯪	9.3.16	Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.	3.8	4.2	650	29.5	-
Seven 420 Cup	★★★★⯪	31.8.22	Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.	4.2	3.4	560	35.3	-

CHEVROLET

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corvette 3LT	★★★★☆	22.6.22	Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.	3.9	3.2	1679	32.9	-
Corvette Z06 3LZ	★★★★☆	16.8.23	Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.	3.1	2.4	1670	26.1	-

CITROEN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ami Colour	★★⯪☆☆	11.1.23	Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.	-	-	471	-	39
ë-C3 Max	★★★⯪☆	30.4.25	Predictable limitations but also plenty of usability, space and cheer for the money.	10.7	10.3	1479	2.8	-
C3 Aircross Hybrid 136 Max	★★★⯪☆	22.10.25	Keenly priced and cleverly packaged – if you order with care.	9.3	8.6	1381	41.5	-
C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto	★★★☆☆	26.5.21	Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.	9.5	9.2	1320	56.4	-
ë-C4 X Shine	★★★⯪☆	3.5.23	EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.	9.7	8.8	1623	-	162
C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus	★★★⯪☆	13.2.19	Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.	9.0	8.5	1540	47.8	-
C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus	★★★★☆	28.9.22	Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.	7.8	7.1	1502	47.8	-

CUPRA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Born 204PS 58kWh V3	★★★⯪☆	6.7.22	As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.	6.7	6.2	1794	-	220
Born VZ First Edition	★★★★☆	9.10.24	An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.	5.4	4.2	1996	3.5	269
Leon Estate 310PS VZ3	★★★★☆	8.9.21	Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.	4.9	4.3	1707	40.1	-
Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2	★★★★☆	27.7.22	Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.	5.9	4.7	1468	43.4	-
Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG	★★★⯪☆	23.1.19	Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.	4.9	4.4	1615	36.7	-
Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG	★★★★⯪	3.2.21	Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.	5.1	4.3	1583	36.4	-
Terramar 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2	★★★★☆	18.6.25	Hottish cousin of the Volkswagen Tiguan is likeable but a bit too sensible.	5.6	5.1	1737	35.0	-
Tavascan V1	★★★☆☆	5.2.25	Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.	6.0	5.0	2129	3.2	246

DACIA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige	★★★★☆	28.4.21	Compromised in surprisingly few areas.	11.9	11.9	1096	54.1	-
Jogger TCe 110 Comfort	★★★★⯪	20.4.22	Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.	11.0	11.0	1267	48.5	-
Duster Hybrid 140 Journey	★★★★⯪	27.11.24	Notably improved yet barely any pricier.	9.7	8.7	1413	40.2	-
Bigster Hybrid 155 Journey	★★★★☆	11.6.25	Big Duster in name, big Duster in nature.	8.9	7.8	-	47.5	-

DS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige	★★★☆☆	10.7.19	No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.	8.8	8.3	1205	48.6	-
4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+	★★★⯪☆	29.6.22	High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.	7.4	6.0	1706	44.7	26
7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige	★★★⯪☆	19.9.18	DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.	8.6	7.0	1616	44.6	-
7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première	★★★⯪☆	26.4.23	More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.	5.7	4.6	1956	36.6	29
9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus	★★★⯪☆	2.2.22	Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.	8.6	7.1	1886	44.7	20

FERRARI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
296 GTB	★★★★★	21.12.22	Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.	2.7	1.9	1648	37.8	15
SF90 Stradale	★★★★☆	3.11.21	Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.	2.5	1.8	1698	24.4	16

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

FIAT

500 Twinair Lounge ★★★½☆ 24.11.10
Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.
11.7 13.0 1070 42.1 -

500e 42kWh Icon ★★★★☆ 26.1.22
More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.
8.1 7.7 1365 - 142

600e La Prima ★★★½☆ 27.3.24
Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.
8.8 7.7 1587 - 173

FORD

Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X ★★★★½ 20.2.19
Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.
8.9 7.8 1417 43.8 -

Focus ST ★★★★☆ 11.9.19
Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.
6.1 4.9 1433 40.7 -

Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium ★★★★½ 25.3.20
The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.
10.0 9.6 1260 50.0 -

Puma Gen-E Select ★★★★☆ 4.6.25
Ford finally brings engagement to the small EV class.
7.2 7.2 - 3.4 179

Puma ST ★★★★☆ 24.3.21
Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.
7.2 6.2 1301 41.5 -

Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD ★★★½☆ 23.10.24
Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.
5.8 4.8 2067 2.9 262

Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line ★★★½☆ 24.6.20
Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.
- - 1844 - -

Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD ★★★★☆ 23.6.21
Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.
6.8 5.6 2130 - -

Mustang Mach-E GT AWD ★★★☆☆ 27.4.22
Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.
4.2 3.5 2298 - -

Mustang Dark Horse ★★★½☆ 20.11.24
Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.
4.5 3.5 1853 26.1 -

Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium ★★★½☆ 10.7.24
Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.
10.8 10.6 1426 47.4 -

Tourneo Connect 1.5 Ecoboost PHEV Titanium ★★★½☆ 2.7.25
PHEV power is a smart choice in this versatile, though expensive, utility MPV.
9.7 9.5 1876 40.3 64

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited ★★★★☆ 8.5.24
Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.
12.1 11.8 1971 38.8 -

Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak ★★★★½ 14.6.23
Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.
9.8 9.9 2348 36.6 -

GENESIS

G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line ★★★½☆ 10.11.21
Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.
7.2 6.7 1751 60.4 -

Electrified G80 ★★★½☆ 12.10.22
Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.
4.4 4.0 2349 - 272

GV60 Sport Plus ★★★★☆ 24.8.22
Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.
3.8 3.1 2192 - 220

GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater ★★★½☆ 15.9.21
Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.
6.7 6.6 2217 45.0 -

GWM

Ora Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition ★★½☆☆ 1.2.23
Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.
7.7 7.2 1580 - 154

HONDA

E Advance ★★★½☆ 26.8.20
More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.
7.9 - 1535 - 110

Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX ★★★½☆ 7.10.20
Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.
9.6 10.0 1248 57.0 -

Civic Type R ★★★★☆ 10.9.25
Road-legal touring car vibe perfected. Sensational – if a little serious.
5.4 4.5 1417 37.4 -

HR-V e:HEV Advance Style ★★★½☆ 24.11.21
Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.
9.2 9.3 1397 43.2 -

e:Ny1 Advance ★★★☆☆ 1.11.23
EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.
8.6 6.9 1756 - 211

HYUNDAI

i10 1.2 MPi Premium ★★★★☆ 15.4.20
Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.
12.3 12.9 999 52.5 -

Inster 49kWh Long Range 02 ★★★½☆ 24.9.25
Dinky looks but a surprisingly grown-up and versatile ownership experience.
9.6 8.8 - 3.3 179

i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect ★★★½☆ 24.2.21
Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.
9.7 10.1 1065 63.5 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

i20 N ★★★★½ 25.8.21
N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.
6.1 5.4 1231 50.6 -

Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate ★★★½☆ 7.6.23
Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.
7.2 6.2 2006 - 272

Kona 1.0 120PS Advance ★★★★☆ 6.9.23
Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.
10.4 10.3 1352 50.4 -

Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium ★★★★☆ 17.3.21
Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.
7.6 6.2 1612 47.7 -

Ioniq 5 N ★★★★★ 7.8.24
A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.
3.5 2.7 2221 - 224

Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium ★★★★☆ 16.10.24
A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.
7.9 7.5 2007 32.9 -

Nexo ★★★½☆ 12.6.19
Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.
9.6 9.7 1852 - -

INEOS

Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster ★★★½☆ 20.9.23
Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.
8.0 8.1 2682 20.9 -

JAECOO

7 SHS 2WD Luxury ★★½☆☆ 9.4.25
Chinese PHEV SUV is efficient and keenly priced but has too many usability flaws.
7.3 6.4 1814 35.0 41

JAGUAR

I-Pace EV400 S ★★★★½ 12.9.18
Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.
4.5 3.5 2236 - -

F-Pace SVR ★★★★½ 24.7.19
Broad-batted and can vividly thrill but hasn't forgotten its SUV roots.
4.1 3.5 2070 29.4 -

F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE ★★★★½ 1.12.21
Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.
5.1 4.6 2264 - 24

F-Type P575 R AWD Coupé ★★★★☆ 29.4.20
The same likeable bruiser behind those prettier features.
- - 1743 - -

JEEP

Avenger Electric Summit ★★★½☆ 24.1.24
Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.
8.3 6.9 1601 - 172

Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★½☆ 3.10.18
Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.
11.0 11.5 1540 44.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Compass 4xe S ★★★☆☆ 16.2.22
Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.
6.4 5.7 1872 46.9 22

Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★½☆ 28.10.15
Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.
10.8 11.2 1502 52.6 -

Renegade 4xe Trailhawk ★★★☆☆ 30.6.21
Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.
6.7 5.6 1816 39.4 21

Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland ★★★★☆ 10.4.19
Off-road icon is now more competent on it.
9.0 9.1 2122 37.6 -

KGM

Tivoli XLV ELX Auto ★★★☆☆ 14.9.16
Practical, well-priced crossover is competent but far from compelling.
12.0 12.6 1469 - -

Torres 1.5T K40 AWD ★★½☆☆ 4.6.25
Cheerful enough, although not as cheap or capable as we had hoped.
11.3 12.0 1661 35.0 -

KIA

Picanto 1.0 MPI 2 ★★★½☆ 11.9.24
No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.
13.4 13.9 985 51.4 -

Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition ★★★½☆ 20.11.19
Looks good and drives well yet lacks some practicality and polish.
9.3 8.7 1452 46.8 -

TOP 3

BEST SPORTS CARS

1 Alpine A110

2 Porsche 911

3 Mazda MX-5

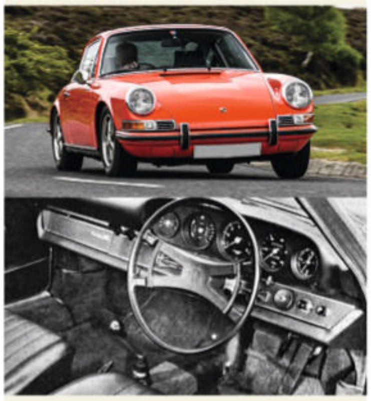
SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Road tests revisited

2008 RENAULTSPORT TWINGO 133 CUP

Second-generation city car gets heated up by Dieppe. Its many faults include "a dowdy interior, dodgy refinement and an occasionally disastrous ride" and its engine is "not that special", but we can easily look past all that because it's "riotously fun to drive".

Price £12,625
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1598cc, petrol
Power 131bhp at 6750rpm
Torque 118lb ft at 4400rpm
Weight 1120kg
0-60mph 8.7sec
0-100mph 25.2sec
Top speed 125mph
Economy 30.8mpg



1968 PORSCHE 911E SPORTOMATIC

Standard 911 gets extra 10bhp from fuel injection and option of novel gearbox – basically a manual without a clutch pedal. "A good compromise, whether in heavy traffic or on long cross-country journeys."

Price £3993
Engine 6 cyls horizontally opposed, 1991cc, petrol
Power 140bhp at 6500rpm
Torque 129lb ft at 4500rpm
Weight 1270kg
0-60mph 9.8sec
0-100mph 25.9sec
Top speed 134mph
Economy 20.0mpg

READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE*

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Soul EV Urban	★★★½☆	5.7.23	Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.	8.0	8.3	1569	-	147
Niro EV 3	★★★★☆	7.9.22	A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.	6.9	5.6	1739	-	246
EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line	★★★★☆	31.12.24	New-era Niro is rationally compelling although it's not a game-changer.	7.2	6.4	1858	2.6	265
Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S	★★★½☆	15.6.22	Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive.	7.3	6.4	1658	44.8	-
EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S	★★★★☆	9.10.24	Not the outstanding EV it once was yet still a likeably bold choice.	7.5	6.3	-	2.9	227
EV6 GT	★★★½☆	4.10.23	Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.	3.6	2.7	2161	-	209
Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2	★★★½☆	20.1.21	Lacks polish, although its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.	8.5	7.9	2006	43.3	-
EV9 GT-Line S	★★★★☆	31.1.24	Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.	5.1	4.6	2660	-	220
LAMBORGHINI								
Huracán Performante	★★★★½	11.10.17	Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.	2.9	2.0	1590	22.4	-
Huracán Evo RWD	★★★★½	20.5.20	Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.	-	-	1389	-	-
Revuelto	★★★★½	4.12.24	New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.	2.5	1.7	1960	24.1	6
Urus	★★★★☆	3.7.19	Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind.	3.3	2.8	2285	28.5	-
LAND ROVER								
Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★½	10.2.21	A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.	6.8	5.9	2158	32.7	24
Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE	★★★★☆	8.1.20	Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.	10.3	10.5	2145	47.5	-
Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury	★★★★½	12.4.17	A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.	8.7	8.8	2230	-	-
Range Rover Velar D240 HSE	★★★½☆	30.8.17	Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.	9.3	9.0	2089	48.2	-
Defender 110 P400 X	★★★★½	13.5.20	World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.	-	-	2388	-	-
Defender 110 P635 Octa Edition 1	★★★★½	30.4.25	Outrageous, unnecessary and totally awe-inspiring.	4.6	3.7	2717	22.1	-
Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE	★★★★½	2.11.22	Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.	7.2	6.6	2511	42.5	-
Range Rover Sport SV Edition One	★★★½☆	28.8.24	More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.	3.9	5.1	2546	28.9	-
Range Rover D350 HSE	★★★★½	13.7.22	A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.	6.3	6.0	2667	35.9	-
Range Rover P550e Autobiography	★★★★☆	9.4.25	A unique and enthralling character that brings added refinement in PHEV form.	4.9	4.0	2979	26.6	44
LEXUS								
LBX FWD Premium Plus Design	★★★½☆	29.5.24	Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.	8.4	8.4	1306	45.2	-
NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack	★★★★☆	16.3.22	Interesting, refined and efficient, although not as polished as the best.	7.1	6.7	1812	44.7	-
RX 500h F Sport	★★★½☆	22.3.23	Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.	6.1	5.5	2088	31.7	-
ES 300h Takumi	★★★½☆	6.2.19	Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.	8.7	7.6	1742	48.8	-
RC F Ultimate Edition	★★★½☆	6.11.24	Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.	4.7	3.8	1733	30.1	-
LM 350h AWD Takumi	★★★☆☆	7.2.24	MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.	8.6	8.2	2368	40.5	-
LOTUS								
Emira V6 First Edition	★★★★½	2.4.25	The British sports car is alive, well and expensive.	4.4	4.0	1493	29.0	-
Emeya 600 GT	★★★★☆	28.5.25	A good electric saloon and a good Lotus.	4.1	2.8	2478	2.4	218
Eletre R	★★★½☆	24.7.24	There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.	3.1	2.2	2682	-	216
Evija	★★★★☆	30.7.25	Mind-blowingly fast and intense, with some defining digital inhibitions.	2.8	1.9	1906	2.2	122
MASERATI								
Grecale Trofeo	★★★½☆	18.10.23	A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.	3.6	3.2	2097	33.6	-
Levante S Granlusso	★★★½☆	8.5.19	Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it.	5.1	4.5	2232	23.7	-
Granturismo Trofeo	★★★½☆	11.9.24	An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.	3.6	3.1	-	33.0	-
Granturismo Folgore	★★★½☆	26.2.25	Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.	2.9	2.3	2358	2.3	183
MC20 Cielo	★★★★☆	16.10.24	Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.	4.0	2.8	1783	29.6	-
MAZDA								
2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav	★★★★☆	22.4.15	The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.	10.4	11.0	1050	-	-
3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport	★★★★☆	6.11.19	Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.	9.1	9.1	1425	57.0	-
MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech	★★★½☆	10.3.21	Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.	9.1	8.6	1663	-	-
CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line	★★★★☆	19.2.25	Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.	7.6	7.6	1422	45.2	-
CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav	★★★★☆	28.6.17	Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.	9.4	9.2	1620	53.9	-
CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line	★★★½☆	10.5.23	Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.	7.6	7.2	1893	52.3	-
MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav	★★★★½	2.9.15	An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.	8.4	7.9	1050	-	-
McLAREN								
720S	★★★★★	24.5.17	Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.	2.9	2.0	1419	24.2	-
750S	★★★★☆	19.6.24	McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.	2.9	2.0	1412	28.8	-
Artura	★★★★½	19.10.22	Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.	3.2	2.1	1552	32.9	17
Artura Spider	★★★★½	6.11.24	Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.	3.1	2.2	1618	27.2	17

GETTY IMAGES

---

*For three weeks from publication date

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
GT	★★★½☆	27.1.21	Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.	3.3	2.3	1580	34.2	

MERCEDES-AMG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A45 S 4Matic+ Plus	★★★★½	4.3.20	AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.	4.1	3.3	1661	41.5	-
C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate	★★★☆☆	31.7.24	Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.	3.3	2.8	2217	27.1	7.1
CLE 53 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus	★★★★☆	20.8.25	Appealing GT leaves something on the table.	3.9	3.5	2012	26.9	-
GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé	★★★★½	13.3.19	AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.	3.3	2.7	2135	30.1	-
GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé	★★★½☆	21.6.23	Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.	2.9	2.5	2339	23.9	6
EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition	★★★★☆	8.6.22	Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.	3.6	2.8	2673	-	259
S63 E Performance Night Edition	★★★★☆	2.10.24	Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.	3.5	2.7	2666	26.1	-
GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★½☆	14.10.20	Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.	5.4	4.9	2471	29.4	-
SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★½☆	26.7.23	Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.	3.5	2.8	1939	26.2	-
GT 43 Premium Coupé	★★★★☆	3.9.25	Less grunt with more grin for less outlay – but a rear-driven GT 55 would be better still.	4.5	3.7	-	36.6	-
GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé	★★★½☆	14.8.24	Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.	3.1	2.7	1972	30.7	-

MERCEDES-BENZ

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A200 AMG Line Executive	★★★★☆	24.5.23	Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.	7.8	7.3	1396	59.3	-
A250e AMG Line Premium	★★★☆☆	5.8.20	Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.	6.7	5.4	1665	57.8	-
B180 Sport	★★★★☆	3.4.19	In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.	8.4	8.3	1405	51.3	-
C300e AMG Line	★★★★½	4.5.22	Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.	5.8	5.1	2005	49.0	48
E220d AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	3.1.24	An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.	7.2	5.9	1917	65.8	-
E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus	★★★★½	19.3.25	Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need.	4.9	4.3	2167	46.1	-
EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★½☆	4.1.23	Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.	6.0	5.5	2386	-	262
EQS 450+ Business Class	★★★★☆	7.5.25	Progress has been made, but this limousine still isn't quite the ultimate luxury EV.	5.9	4.9	2608	2.6	248
EQS 450 Business Class SUV	★★★½☆	6.3.24	Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.	5.5	5.2	2899	-	265
S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive	★★★★½	6.4.22	Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.	5.2	4.2	2530	37.0	45
EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	17.11.21	Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.	8.4	7.6	2030	-	200
GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	16.9.20	Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.	7.4	7.1	1810	55.4	-
EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	18.5.22	A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.	7.7	6.8	2235	-	-
GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★½☆	13.9.23	Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.	6.5	6.0	1929	41.2	-
GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	12.2.20	Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.	6.5	6.0	2634	38.2	-
G350d AMG Line	★★★★☆	17.7.19	Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.	7.5	7.2	2451	31.3	-
G500 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	25.9.24	Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.	5.1	4.5	-	30.7	-
G580 with EQ Technology	★★★½☆	17.9.25	Electric G-Class has no true raison d'être but is still strangely compelling.	4.5	3.9	3140	1.6	209
CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.	6.1	5.5	2122	37.1	49

MG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★½☆	12.6.24	No bad vices but lacks a final layer of polish.	6.8	6.2	1311	47.9	-
4 EV Long Range SE	★★★★☆	5.4.23	Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.	7.1	6.1	1692	-	185
S5 EV Long Range Trophy	★★★★☆	23.7.25	It outstrips expectations for the money, except on range.	6.0	5.1	1723	3.3	217
ZS Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★☆☆	22.1.25	Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.	7.6	6.6	1422	41.5	-
IM6 100 Long Range	★★★½☆	29.10.25	Exceptional mixed with bland and irritating.	5.5	4.0	2340	3.0	299

MINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
John Cooper Works	★★★★☆	14.5.25	A proper hot hatch let down by a stiff ride and an impenetrable user interface.	5.8	4.5	1363	42.0	-
Countryman C Exclusive	★★★½☆	17.4.24	Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.	8.7	7.7	1618	46.9	-
Aceman SE Exclusive	★★★½☆	8.1.25	Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.	6.8	5.7	1756	3.1	162

MORGAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Plus Four	★★★½☆	12.8.20	Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.	5.1	4.3	1013	54.0	-
Supersport	★★★★☆	6.8.25	Quite plainly the most polished Morgan to date yet still charismatic.	3.8	3.1	1180	44.2	-
Super 3	★★★★½	9.11.22	Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.	6.9	5.9	644	43.5	-

NISSAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna	★★★½☆	29.1.20	Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.	11.9	11.8	1256	46.0	-
Qashqai E-Power Tekna+	★★★★☆	8.10.25	Hybrid SUV takes big strides, not least on real-world efficiency.	7.6	6.1	1681	48.8	-
Ariya 87kWh Evolve	★★★½☆	26.10.22	Surprisingly traditional and luxurious although not wholly successful.	8.2	6.4	2109	-	-
X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna	★★★★☆	22.2.23	Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.	6.6	6.0	1947	33.8	-

OMODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
5 1.6 TGDI Comfort	★★½☆☆	20.11.24	Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.	7.4	6.3	1474	38.2	-

PEUGEOT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
e-208 Allure Premium	★★★★☆	6.5.20	Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV.	-	-	1455	-	-
208 1.2 100PS Style	★★★☆☆	5.11.25	Stylish and efficient, but could be more memorable to drive – and ergonomic.	10.4	10.4	1122	51.3	-
308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT	★★★★☆	25.5.22	A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.	9.5	9.2	1358	55.3	-
408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8	★★★★☆	11.10.23	Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.	8.2	7.3	1746	42.1	40
508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto	★★★★☆	24.10.18	Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.	8.8	8.5	1671	52.0	-
508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8	★★★★☆	8.7.20	This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.	-	-	1720	-	-

TOP 3

BEST DIESEL CARS

1 Skoda Superb

2 BMW X5

3 Volkswagen Golf

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
508 SW Hybrid4 PSE	★★★★☆	5.5.21	Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.	5.7	4.7	1892	44.0	-
e-2008 GT Line	★★★⯪☆	30.9.20	Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.	9.5	8.9	1638	-	-
e-3008 73kWh Allure	★★★⯪☆	4.8.24	Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.	8.5	7.1	2132	-	219
5008 Hybrid 136 GT	★★★☆☆	12.2.25	Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.	9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	-

POLESTAR

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 BST Edition 270	★★★⯪☆	12.4.23	A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.	4.5	3.4	2161	-	188
3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition	★★★★☆	12.2.25	Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.	4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235
4 Long Range Single Motor	★★★☆☆	24.9.25	Electric crossover is desirable but something of a missed opportunity.	6.8	5.5	2246	2.5	310

PORSCHE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
718 Boxster	★★★★⯪	8.6.16	Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.	5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-
718 Cayman S	★★★★⯪	10.8.16	Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.	4.8	3.9	1430	-	-
718 Cayman GT4 RS	★★★★★	14.9.22	A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.	3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-
911 Carrera S	★★★★⯪	3.9.25	Supercar quick but gloriously rounded with it.	3.0	2.5	1600	34.5	-
911 Carrera T	★★★★☆	30.8.23	Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.	4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-
911 Carrera GTS	★★★★⯪	5.3.25	Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.	2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-
911 Turbo S	★★★★⯪	10.8.22	Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.	2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-
911 GT3 PDK	★★★★⯪	11.8.21	Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.	3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-
911 GT3 RS	★★★★⯪	22.11.23	Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.	3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-
911 Dakar	★★★★☆	10.1.24	Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.	3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-
911 S/T	★★★★★	3.7.24	Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.	3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-
Macan Electric	★★★★☆	13.8.25	Well rounded in every sense and not without quietly executed driver appeal.	5.2	4.2	2262	3.0	219
Macan Turbo Electric	★★★⯪☆	19.2.25	Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.	3.0	2.5	-	2.1	219
Cayenne S	★★★★⯪	21.2.24	Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.	5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-
Cayenne Turbo	★★★★☆	5.9.18	As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.	3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-
Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid	★★★⯪☆	27.5.20	Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.	-	-	2490	-	-
Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé	★★★★☆	20.7.22	Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one.	3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-
Panamera 4 E-Hybrid	★★★★☆	22.1.25	Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.	3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29
Taycan Turbo S	★★★★⯪	30.10.24	Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.	2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233

RENAULT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Clio TCe 100 Iconic	★★★★⯪	27.11.19	Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.	11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-
4 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic	★★★★☆	16.7.25	Charismatic but grown-up, the reborn 4 is a real contender.	8.2	7.5	1493	3.3	182
5 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic Five	★★★★⯪	12.3.25	Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.	7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166
Megane E-Tech Techno	★★★⯪☆	23.11.22	Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.	6.9	5.4	1688	-	198
Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC	★★★⯪☆	18.3.20	Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.	9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-
Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition	★★★⯪☆	13.10.21	Eminently sensible but unspectacular.	11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-
Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range	★★★★☆	26.6.24	The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.	8.1	6.3	1916	-	313
Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine	★★★⯪☆	19.7.23	Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.	8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-

ROLLS-ROYCE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghost Series II Black Badge	★★★★⯪	25.6.25	Only flirts with sporting appeal, and gives up no Rolls accomplishments in doing so.	4.5	3.6	2576	25.8	-
Phantom	★★★★★	4.4.18	The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.	5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-
Spectre	★★★★⯪	20.12.23	Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.	4.1	3.1	2935	-	245
Cullinan Black Badge	★★★★☆	19.2.20	Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.	4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-

SEAT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★⯪	19.7.17	Shows rivals how it's done – in most respects.	10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-
Leon eHybrid FR	★★★⯪☆	2.12.20	Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.	7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26
Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★☆	15.11.17	Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.	10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-
Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG	★★★☆☆	25.10.23	Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.	8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-

SKODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort	★★★★⯪	9.2.22	Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.	9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-
Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG	★★★⯪☆	31.7.19	Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.	7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-
Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG	★★★★☆	2.9.20	Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.	8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-
Octavia Estate vRS	★★★★☆	29.1.25	A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.	5.9	4.8	-	37.6	-
Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate	★★★★★	17.7.24	The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.	8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-
Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout	★★★⯪☆	30.1.19	Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.	8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-
Elroq 85 Edition	★★★★⯪	19.3.25	Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV.	6.1	5.0	2085	3.5	246
Enyaq iV 80 Lounge	★★★★☆	18.8.21	Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.	8.3	7.8	2098	-	262

SMART

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
#1 Premium	★★★⯪☆	8.11.23	Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.	5.6	4.6	1861	-	229
#3 Premium	★★★⯪☆	15.5.24	Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.	5.7	4.9	1832	-	205

SUBARU

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring	★★★⯪☆	28.2.24	Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.	10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-
Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring	★★★⯪☆	27.9.23	A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked.	9.3	8.7	1690	42.8	-
Solterra AWD Touring	★★★☆☆	15.3.23	A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough.	6.7	6.2	2051	-	169

SUZUKI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT	★★★★⯪	7.4.21	Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around.	6.4	5.8	1966	44.4	48

TOP 3

BEST 4x4s

1 Land Rover Defender Octa

2 Jeep Wrangler

3 Toyota Land Cruiser

SCAN THE
CODE TO SEE
THE TOP 10

TESLA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Standard Range Plus	★★★★☆	4.9.19	Wrinkles aside, it offers great electric performance and usability at this price.	5.8	4.7	1633	-	156
Model 3 Long Range	★★★★☆	14.2.24	Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.	4.4	3.4	1846	-	277
Model Y Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive	★★★★☆	27.8.25	Evolution keeps Model Y nicely on the boil – for now.	5.7	4.3	1903	3.2	315
Model S P90D	★★★★½	20.4.16	Great EV, intriguing driver's car. Not quite the perfect luxury GT.	3.5	3.0	2220	-	214
Model S Plaid	★★★½☆	2.8.23	Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.	2.4	1.7	2220	-	301
Model X 90D	★★★★☆	15.2.17	High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.	5.2	4.2	2508	-	147

TOYOTA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Aygo X Limited Edition	★★★½☆	11.5.22	A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.	15.6	16.5	974	58.7	-
Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design	★★★★☆	23.9.20	Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.	9.2	8.8	1140	65.0	-
GR Yaris Circuit Pack	★★★★★	3.3.21	Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.	5.2	5.0	1283	39.2	-
Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports	★★★★☆	5.6.19	A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.	8.5	7.7	1537	52.6	-
Prius Plug-in Design	★★★★☆	23.4.25	Better late than never for best Prius to date.	6.6	5.6	1542	56.1	46
bZ4X AWD Vision	★★★½☆	18.1.23	A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.	6.4	5.9	2023	-	208
Land Cruiser 2.8 D-4D 204 Invincible	★★★★☆	21.5.25	Remains supremely tough but now has added kerb appeal and drivability.	10.3	10.3	2503	30.7	-
Mirai Design Premium	★★★★☆	16.6.21	Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.	8.7	8.3	1937	-	-
GR Supra Pro	★★★★☆	14.8.19	Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.	4.4	3.6	1495	39.0	-
Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport	★★★½☆	1.3.23	Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.	10.0	9.5	2241	32.5	-

VAUXHALL

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto	★★★½☆	22.1.20	Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.	11.2	11.5	1171	51.8	-
Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line	★★★½☆	5.10.22	Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.	9.9	9.2	1304	55.3	-
Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite	★★★☆☆	7.6.17	Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.	9.8	10.3	1278	54.2	-
Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto	★★★½☆	12.5.21	The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.	9.3	9.1	1238	48.6	-
Grandland Hybrid GS	★★★½☆	27.8.25	Spacious, functional, efficient and good value, yet neither grand nor lovely.	9.8	9.3	1623	52.2	-
Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy	★★★½☆	27.12.18	Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.	14.7	16.2	1552	60.1	-

VOLKSWAGEN

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE	★★★★½	31.1.18	Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.	10.7	11.2	1145	57.1	-
Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+	★★★★☆	1.8.18	A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.	6.7	5.9	1342	46.8	-
Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG	★★★★½	22.7.20	Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.	8.3	7.8	1330	60.0	-
Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style	★★★★½	23.10.24	New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.	7.2	6.1	1619	46.5	-
Golf GTI	★★★½☆	25.9.24	'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.	5.3	4.4	-	47.2	-
Golf R	★★★★☆	14.4.21	Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price.	4.4	3.7	1520	43.9	-
ID 3 Pro Performance Life	★★★★☆	31.3.21	Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.	7.0	6.5	1757	-	145
Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake	★★★½☆	9.6.21	Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.	7.1	6.0	1783	52.5	-
ID 7 Pro Match	★★★★½	13.3.24	Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.	6.1	5.1	2162	-	239
ID 7 GTX Tourer	★★★☆☆	13.8.25	Sporty electric estate is appealing but not the product the GTX brand needs.	5.3	4.6	2353	2.9	241
T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG	★★★★½	24.1.18	Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.	6.7	6.5	1534	37.5	-
T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG	★★½☆☆	10.6.20	It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.	-	-	1540	-	-
Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line	★★★½☆	22.5.24	Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.	9.4	9.2	1606	44.9	-
ID 4 GTX Max	★★★½☆	27.10.21	GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.	6.2	5.6	2220	-	200
Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech	★★★½☆	8.8.18	An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.	7.2	6.6	2292	41.6	-
Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance	★★★½☆	5.6.24	It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.	6.2	5.7	2446	34.1	26
Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG	★★★★☆	3.2.16	A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one.	9.9	9.7	1666	-	-
Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style	★★★★☆	8.3.23	Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.	8.4	7.1	2243	37.9	14
ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro	★★★★☆	8.2.23	It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.	9.5	9.1	2498	-	185
Grand California 600	★★★½☆	2.1.20	Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.	15.8	16.7	3095	28.5	-
Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB	★★★☆☆	30.3.22	Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.	9.1	9.0	2108	39.1	-
Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sibling car.	7.2	6.4	1836	44.5	73

VOLVO

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus	★★★☆☆	1.5.24	Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism.	5.7	5.1	1779	-	179
C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate	★★★½☆	13.4.22	A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.	4.4	3.6	2172	-	194
XC40 D4 AWD First Edition	★★★★½	7.2.18	Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger siblings, if not better.	8.5	8.5	1735	43.8	-
XC60 T8 Ultra	★★★½☆	15.10.25	Volvo's crowd pleaser is still classy and spacious, though far from cutting edge.	4.6	4.1	2145	34.3	40
XC90 B5 AWD Ultra Bright	★★★½☆	2.7.25	Still a mature, versatile and wilfully unspectacular choice.	8.0	7.5	2117	37.0	-
V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★½	21.9.22	Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.	4.9	4.3	2036	38.0	51
V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★½	11.11.20	Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.	5.6	4.9	2109	41.9	-

XPENG

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G6 RWD Standard Range	★★★½☆	26.2.25	Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.	6.8	6.2	2067	3.3	208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

Toyota GR GT Late 2026
V8-powered spiritual successor to the Lexus LFA supercar will take on the Aston Martin DB12.

BYD Atto 2 DM-i Early 2026
UK's smallest PHEV has an electric range of 56 miles and will offer either 174bhp or 201bhp.

Toyota Land Cruiser FJ 2027
Baby 4x4 is based on the same platform as the Land Cruiser but its wheelbase is 270mm shorter.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST

Why I love... SIR LEWIS HAMILTON

BY SAM PHILLIPS

A scarcely believable 17 years ago this Sunday, I was sitting in my parents' conservatory with my eyes glued to the TV, hoping that my Formula 1 hero would become a world champion.

With Lewis Hamilton out of contention down in sixth place, it looked certain that Felipe Massa would take the crown – but in the dying moments of the race came the immortal words from commentator Martin Brundle: "Is that Glock?!"

Hamilton sneaked down the inside of Timo's slow-moving Toyota on the last corner of the last lap in Brazil to secure the trophy in one of the most emotionally laden and iconic moments in motorsport history.

Fast forward to 2025 and statistically Hamilton is firmly the greatest F1 driver of all time, with seven world titles, 105 race wins and 104 pole positions to his name. Yet his talent cannot be measured by numbers alone, and there are several standout races that cement his legendary status.

He put on a dominant display at the rain-soaked British Grand Prix in 2008, lapping every car up to third and winning by more than a minute while showing phenomenal skill in changing conditions. In Bahrain in 2014, he duelled with Mercedes team-mate Nico Rosberg and eventually outclassed his title rival in one of the best races of the hybrid era so far. And then there was the patience and precision Hamilton displayed in Turkey in 2020, as he deftly managed his worn intermediate tyres to claim his seventh world title.

Just when it seemed the Hamilton story had been told, this happened

And it's not just Hamilton's gobsmacking driving prowess that makes him one of the best: his unwavering consistency while performing under immense pressure also sets him apart.

A young Hamilton snatched glory from jaws of misery in 2008

> **"His legacy will be one that transcends the F1 paddock"**

Hamilton needed to win the last four races of the 2021 season to ensure his eighth world title was still a possibility, and he drove with a relentless level of determination to try to make it so. Shunted to the back of the grid in Brazil for a DRS infringement, Hamilton battled to fifth in the sprint before storming to a sensational victory in Sunday's race. I knew he would win, but this was a masterclass. He then dominated in Qatar, trumped a wild Max Verstappen in Saudi Arabia and, well, we all know what happened in Abu Dhabi. I prefer not to think about it.

Some of Hamilton's most worthy achievements come outside the context of the leaderboard, his commitment to bettering the lives of others revealing his true character. From wearing a rainbow-decorated helmet to support the LGBTQ+ community to taking the knee for the Black Lives Matter movement, he has put himself forward as an advocate for change. He even founded his own charity, Mission 44, to support young people around the world in education and guide them into STEM careers.

And while many have been quick to judge Hamilton for pursuing his interests in fashion and music, even at the age of 40 his passion for racing shines through.

This was made clear when he made the shock decision to ditch Mercedes and join the storied Scuderia Ferrari in search of another title. The image of him standing outside the office of Enzo Ferrari at Fiorano, a red F40 parked behind him, is already etched into the history books. 'The greatest driver joining the greatest team' has created a whole new narrative for the sport.

The switch has been challenging, but even if that eighth title continues to elude him, his legacy will be one that transcends the boundaries of the F1 paddock. A knight of the realm, a role model for generations to come and, for me, the greatest of all time.

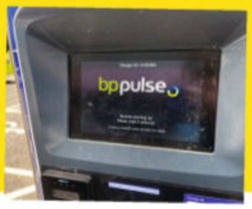
What we did this week

SAFARI, SO GOOD

I've recently spent a couple of weeks out in Africa, where, shockingly, I saw only a handful of Land Rovers. Nearly every working vehicle in the Serengeti was a J70 Toyota Land Cruiser pick-up (still in production after four decades) modified locally to accommodate tourists. **MURRAY SCULLION**

CHARGES DROPPED

Imagine my alarm when my only local EV rapid charger refused to accept either my credit card or debit card. To my relief, BP Pulse picked up the phone instantly and the apologetic agent remotely rebooted the charger for me – a five-minute process. Shame it didn't fix the problem. Thankfully I still had 10% left to drive elsewhere. **KRIS CULMER**



A REAL COSY COUPE

During our recent test of the Frontline MGB restomod (feature coming soon), we passed the 15,000-mile mark in this demonstrator car, which has a night-time ambience that would be the envy of any nightclub. Not a haptic slider or mock-carbonfibre inlay in sight. **MATT PRIOR**

GETTY IMAGES

AUTOCAR PODCAST

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR WEEKLY PODCAST

Find out what they've been driving and where they've been, what's caught their eye and what's on their mind. Available every Wednesday.

Simply search for 'My Week In Cars' via Apple, Spotify, Amazon, or your preferred podcast platform.

Listen on Spotify amazon music

SEAT LEON
Estate e-HYBRID
S26 BCN
UK
No Ordinary Drive

Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Leon Estate range mpg (litres/100km) combined: 48.7 (5.8) – 706.2 (0.4). Combined CO_2 emissions 132 – 8 (g/km). Figures for the SEAT Leon Estate range, including petrol/diesel and hybrid vehicles. Figures for hybrid vehicles were obtained using a combination of battery power and fuel. Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption, CO_2 and electric range figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Data correct at 06/2025.